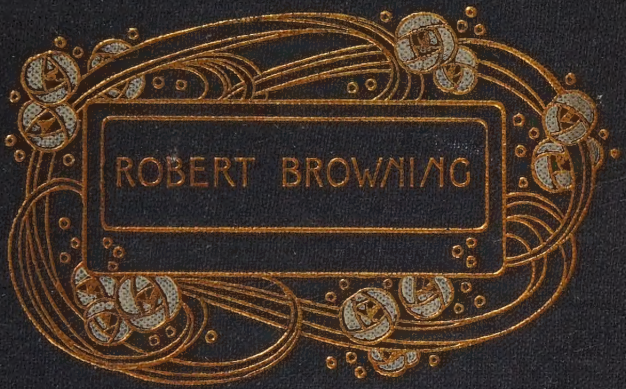

ROBERT BROWNING

LONDON
COUNTY COUNCIL

West Square Central
SCHOOL

AWARDED TO

Violet Smith.

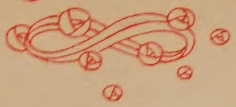
FOR

English Subjects

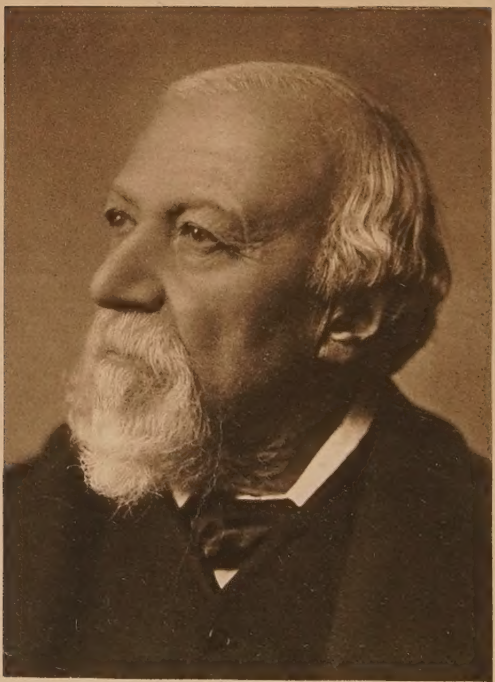
L. Gordon
HEAD TEACHER

March 1925

The Red Letter Poets



POEMS BY
ROBERT BROWNING



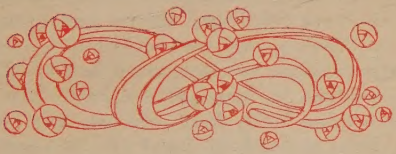
Robert Browning

From a photograph by J. Cassiall Smith

POEMS

By

ROBERT BROWNING



With an Introduction by

ALICE MEYNELL

BLACKIE AND SON LIMITED
LONDON GLASGOW BOMBAY
Printed in Great Britain

Robert Browning long outlived the indifference of the world to his work in his youth. There might well be some incredulity among the generation that valued him as to the coldness of the generation that neglected him, so general did the recognition of his extraordinary power become long before his death. Nor had that indifference been greatly prolonged; he had fewer years of unpopularity than had Wordsworth, and of contempt, dislike, and derision, such as Wordsworth underwent at the hands of licensed critics, Browning received nothing. He was treated with honour by the press before he had gained a public. And that public, when at last his work called it together, was singularly great and various. It was not limited to the company that had learnt the beauty of Wordsworth, and was learning the beauty of Tennyson—lovers of poetry purely. Browning became the most interesting writer of his day to many who sought his pages, not for the sake of the chant, the spirit, or the rapture, but for the sake of an enquiry into actual incidental, accidental human nature in action. Browning is so busy a philosopher, so great a poet and thinker, that his work may under-

go division, selection, and rejection, and suffer no loss. Nay, the effect of the separation of his finer from his less worthy work is one of extraordinary gain. For even an ordinary reader and student may question some of the minor subjects of his thought and minor topics of his poems. Why was so noble a poet delighted with the ingenuities of the mind of a Mr. Sludge the Medium? Why did he dedicate himself to the creation of a Bishop Blougram? Why did he invent his Jews in Rome, and devise a Spanish friar as the "Soliloquy" gives him? Why did he play with the malice of Baldinucci? The question is not so much, What have these things to do with an upright intellect? as, What have they to do with poetry? Obviously, nothing.

I think no other selection from the works of Robert Browning has made the division and exclusion attempted here. Humour, whim, and the grotesque are, needless to say, not excluded, but only the uncontrasted ignominies of the pieces above-named and one or two more.

A young reader should begin with the study of that one sublime poem, "Saul", and, after giving more or less time to the ingenuities, the energies, and the complexities of the rest, he should go to the reading

of "Saul" again. There is in this glorious work a difference in the quality as well as in the degree of poetry. Lofty thoughts there are elsewhere, as in "Abt Vogler" (one of the poems I am sorry to find that copyright forbids me to include in this volume), but "Saul" has the ecstasy of the yonder side, the ecstasy that is beyond imagery and thought, and yet is the nearest thing in the world and the closest to the soul. After the spiritual, intellectual, and natural greatness of "Saul", come the ingenious wisdom of "One Word More"; the simple passion of "Love Among the Ruins", and the "integrity of fire" in others of the love-poems, especially when a woman is supposed to speak; the very subtle eyesight of "By the Fireside", and indeed the fine sense of place that appears in nearly all the poems on Italy;—all these are the work of a man of genius, and intelligible to plain and young people. An editor is, no doubt, almost obliged to invite their attention to the "psychology". It is truly a very world of intricacy, "a mighty maze of walks". Browning's mental work was rather detection than speculation, rather detection than discovery. The most inspired and inspiring of the qualities of his genius is his singular and splendid courage.

The difficulty of mere reading is due in

part to Browning's disregard of quantity in English. Numbers, the foot, quantity, and stress (miscalled "accent") rule our verse unequally and liberally, but must be respected—a poet knows when and how. Browning is free enough in regard to numbers and stress, but quantity he seems intentionally to ignore. To this habit, however, there are in his work some fine exceptions.

Robert Browning was born in Camberwell in 1812. He had not the ordinary education, but nevertheless made himself, after his father's example, a classical scholar. His first poem, "Pauline", appeared in 1833. Two years later his first tragedy, "Strafford", was produced on the stage. The poet's other works, dramatic, lyrical, and narrative, followed one another quickly, his later years being even the more fruitful. His marriage to Miss Barrett, in 1846, gave the world, after the lapse of fifty years, those love-letters the beauty and greatness of which justified their publication. Of such records, it may well be said, the world has need. Browning survived his wife twenty-eight years. He died in Venice, and was buried in Westminster Abbey

ALICE MEYNELL.

Contents

Page

Cavalier Tunes—

I. Marching Along - - - 1

II. Give a Rouse - - - - 2

III. My Wife Gertrude - - - 4

Incident of the French Camp - - 6

Waring - - - - - - 8

Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli - - 19

Cristina - - - - - - 21

Johannes Agricola in Meditation - 24

Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr - 27

The Pied Piper of Hamelin - - 29

How they Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix - - - 43

The Lost Mistress - - - - 48

Home-Thoughts, from Abroad - - 50

Home-Thoughts, from the Sea - - 52

CONTENTS

	Page
Garden-Fancies—	
I. The Flower's Name	53
II. Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis	55
The Flight of the Duchess	60
Song from Pippa Passes	104
The Boy and the Angel	105
Meeting at Night	109
Claret and Tokay	110
Love among the Ruins	112
A Lovers' Quarrel	117
Evelyn Hope	123
A Woman's Last Word	126
A Toccata of Galuppi's	128
By the Fire-side	132
A Serenade at the Villa	145
My Star	148
Love in a Life	149
Life in a Love	150
The Last Ride Together	151
Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha	156
Memorabilia	164
Andrea Del Sarto	165
In a Year	179
Old Pictures in Florence	182

CONTENTS

	Page
Saul	198
"De Gustibus—"	223
The Guardian-Angel	225
Cleon	229
Popularity	248
Two in the Campagna	251
A Grammarian's Funeral	254
One Way of Love	262
Another Way of Love	263
Misconceptions	265
One Word More	266

Cavalier Tunes

I—MARCHING ALONG

Kentish Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing:
And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folks droop,
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen singing this song.

God for King Charles! Pym and such carles
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles!
Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you're (*Chorus*) *marching along, fifty-score strong,*
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

Hampden to Hell, and his obsequies' knell
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well!
England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here

(*Chorus*)

Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song?

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!
Hold by the right, you double your might;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

(*Chorus*)

March we along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!

II—GIVE A ROUSE

King Charles, and who 'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who 's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here 's, in Hell's despite now,
King Charles!

Who gave me the goods that went since?
Who raised me the house that sank once?
Who helped me to gold I spent since?
Who found me in wine you drank once?
(*Chorus*)
King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's despite now,
King Charles!

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
By the old fool's side that begot him?
For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
While Noll's damned troopers shot him?
(*Chorus*)
King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in Hell's despite now,
King Charles!

III—MY WIFE GERTRUDE

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!
Rescue my Castle, before the hot day
Brightens the blue from its silvery grey,

(*Chorus*)
"*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*"

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;
Many's the friend there, will listen and pray
"God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay,

(*Chorus*)
'*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*'"

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array:
Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,

(*Chorus*)
'*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away?*'"

Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest
and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering,
"Nay!
I've better counsellors; what counsel they?
(*Chorus*)
'*Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!*'"

Incident of the French Camp

You know we French stormed Ratisbon
A mile or so away
On a little mound, Napoléon
Stood on our storming-day;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
Oppressive with its mind.

Just as perhaps he mused "My plans
That soar, to earth may fall,
Let once my army-leader Lannes
Waver at yonder wall,"—
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew
Until he reached the mound.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy:
You hardly could suspect—

(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came thro')
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

"Well," cried he, "Emperor, by God's grace
We've got you Ratisbon!
The Marshal's in the market-place,
And you'll be there anon
To see your flag-bird flap his vans
Where I, to heart's desire,
Perched him!" The Chief's eye flashed; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

The Chief's eye flashed; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes:
"You're wounded!" "Nay," his soldier's pride
Touched to the quick, he said:
"I'm killed, Sire!" And, his Chief beside,
Smiling the boy fell dead.

Waring

I

I

What 's become of Waring
Since he gave us all the slip,
Chose land-travel or seafaring,
Boots and chest, or staff and scrip,
Rather than pace up and down
Any longer London-town?

II

Who 'd have guessed it from his lip,
Or his brow's accustomed bearing,
On the night he thus took ship,
Or started landward?—little caring
For us, it seems, who supped together,
(Friends of his too, I remember)
And walked home thro' the merry weather,
The snowiest in all December;
I left his arm that night myself
For what 's-his-name's the new prose-poet,
That wrote the book there, on the shelf—
How, forsooth, was I to know it
If Waring meant to glide away

Like a ghost at break of day?
Never looked he half so gay!

III

He was prouder than the Devil:
How he must have cursed our revel!
Ay, and many other meetings,
Indoor visits, outdoor greetings,
As up and down he paced this London,
With no work done, but great works undone,
Where scarce twenty knew his name.
Why not, then, have earlier spoken,
Written, bustled? Who's to blame
If your silence kept unbroken?
"True, but there were sundry jottings,
Stray-leaves, fragments, blurrs and blottings,
Certain first steps were achieved
Already which"—(is that your meaning?)
"Had well borne out whoe'er believed
In more to come!" But who goes gleaning
Hedge-side chance-blades, while full-sheaved
Stand cornfields by him? Pride, o'erweening
Pride alone, puts forth such claims
O'er the day's distinguished names.

IV

Meantime, how much I loved him,
I find out now I 've lost him:
I, who cared not if I moved him,
Who could so carelessly accost him,
Henceforth never shall get free
Of his ghostly company,
His eyes that just a little wink
As deep I go into the merit
Of this and that distinguished spirit—
His cheeks' raised colour, soon to sink,
As long I dwell on some stupendous
And tremendous (Heaven defend us!)
Monstr'-inform'-ingens-horrend-ous
Demoniaco-seraphic
Penman's latest piece of graphic.
Nay, my very wrist grows warm
With his dragging weight of arm!
E'en so, swimmingly appears,
Thro' one's after-supper musings,
Some lost Lady of old years,
With her beauteous vain endeavour,
And goodness unrepaid as ever;
The face, accustomed to refusings,
We, puppies that we were . . . Oh never
Surely, nice of conscience, scrupled
Being aught like false, forsooth, to?
Telling aught but honest truth to?
What a sin, had we centupled

Its possessor's grace and sweetness!
No! she heard in its completeness
Truth, for truth's a weighty matter,
And, truth at issue, we can't flatter!
Well, 't is done with: she 's exempt
From damning us thro' such a sally;
And so she glides, as down a valley,
Taking up with her contempt,
Past our reach; and in, the flowers
Shut her unregarded hours.

V

Oh, could I have him back once more,
This Waring, but one half-day more!
Back, with the quiet face of yore,
So hungry for acknowledgment
Like mine! I 'd fool him to his bent!
Feed, should not he, to heart's content?
I 'd say, "To only have conceived
Your great works, tho' they ne'er make
progress,
Surpasses all we 've yet achieved!"
I 'd lie so, I should be believed.
I 'd make such havoc of the claims
Of the day's distinguished names
To feast him with, as feasts an ogress
Her sharp-toothed golden-crowned child!

Or, as one feasts a creature rarely
Captured here, unreconciled
To capture; and completely gives
Its pettish humours licence, barely
Requiring that it lives.

VI

Ichabod, Ichabod,
The glory is departed!
Travels Waring East away?
Who, of knowledge, by hearsay,
Reports a man upstarted
Somewhere as a God,
Hordes grown European-hearted,
Millions of the wild made tame
On a sudden at his fame?
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?
Or who, in Moscow, toward the Czar,
With the demurest of footfalls
Over the Kremlin's pavement, bright
With serpentine and syenite,
Steps, with five other Generals,
That simultaneously take snuff,
For each to have pretext enough
To kerchiefwise unfurl his sash
Which, softness' self, is yet the stuff
To hold fast where a steel chain snaps,
And leave the grand white neck no gash?
Waring, in Moscow, to those rough
Cold northern natures borne, perhaps,

Like the lambwhite maiden dear
From the circle of mute kings,
Unable to repress the tear,
Each as his sceptre down he flings,
To Dian's fain at Taurica,
Where now a captive priestess, she alway
Mingles her tender grave Hellenic speech
With theirs, tuned to the hailstone-beaten
beach,
As pours some pigeon, from the myrrhy
lands
Rapt by the whirlblast to fierce Scythian
strands
Where breed the swallows, her melodious
cry
Amid their barbarous twitter!
In Russia? Never! Spain were fitter!
Ay, most likely 't is in Spain
That we and Waring meet again—
Now, while he turns down that cool nar-
row lane
Into the blackness, out of grave Madrid
All fire and shine—abrupt as when there 's
slid
Its stiff gold blazing pall
From some black coffin-lid.
Or, best of all,
I love to think
The leaving us was just a feint;
Back here to London did he slink;

And now works on without a wink
Of sleep, and we are on the brink
Of something great in fresco-paint:
Some garret's ceiling, walls and floor,
Up and down and o'er and o'er
He splashes, as none splashed before
Since great Caldara Polidore:
Or Music means this land of ours
Some favour yet, to pity won
By Purcell from his Rosy Bowers,—
"Give me my so long promised son,
Let Waring end what I begun!"
Then down he creeps and out he steals
Only when the night conceals
His face—in Kent 't is cherry-time,
Or, hops are picking; or, at prime
Of March, he wanders as, too happy,
Years ago when he was young,
Some mild eve when woods grew sappy,
And the early moths had sprung
To life from many a trembling sheath
Woven the warm boughs beneath;
While small birds said to themselves
What should soon be actual song,
And young gnats, by tens and twelves,
Made as if they were the throng
That crowd around and carry aloft
The sound they have nursed, so sweet
and pure,
Out of a myriad noises soft.

Into a tone that can endure
Amid the noise of a July noon,
When all God's creatures crave their boon,
All at once and all in tune,
And get it, happy as Waring then,
Having first within his ken
What a man might do with men,
And far too glad, in the even-glow,
To mix with your world he meant to take
Into his hand he told you, so—
And out of it his world to make,
To contract and to expand
As he shut or oped his hand.
Oh, Waring, what's to really be?
A clear stage and a crowd to see!
Some Garrick—say—out shall not he
The heart of Hamlet's mystery pluck?
Or, where most unclean beasts are rife,
Some Junius—am I right?—shall tuck
His sleeve, and out with flaying-knife!
Some Chatterton shall have the luck
Of calling Rowley into life!
Some one shall somehow run a muck
With this old world, for want of strife
Sound asleep: contrive, contrive
To rouse us, Waring! Who's alive?
Our men scarce seem in earnest now:
Distinguished names!—but 't is, somehow,
As if they played at being names

Still more distinguished, like the games
Of children. Turn our sport to earnest
With a visage of the sternest!
Bring the real times back, confessed
Still later than our very best!

II

I

"When I last saw Waring . . ."
(How all turned to him who spoke—
You saw Waring? Truth or joke?
In land-travel, or sea-faring?)

II

"We were sailing by Triest,
Where a day or two we harboured:
A sunset was in the West,
When, looking over the vessel's side,
One of our company espied
A sudden speck to larboard.
And, as a sea-duck flies and swims
At once, so came the light craft up,
With its sole lateen sail that trims
And turns (the water round its rims
Dancing, as round a sinking cup)
And by us like a fish it curled,
And drew itself up close beside,
Its great sail on the instant furled,
And o'er its planks, a shrill voice cried,

(A neck as bronzed as a Lascar's)
'Buy wine of us, you English Brig?
Or fruit, tobacco and cigars?
A Pilot for you to Triest?
Without one, look you ne'er so big,
They 'll never let you up the bay!
We natives should know best.'
I turned, and 'Just those fellows' way,'
Our captain said, 'The 'long-shore thieves
Are laughing at us in their sleeves.'

III

"In truth, the boy leaned laughing back;
And one, half-hidden by his side
Under the furled sail, soon I spied,
With great grass hat, and kerchief black,
Who looked up, with his kingly throat,
Said somewhat, while the other shook
His hair back from his eyes to look
Their longest at us; then the boat,
I know not how, turned sharply round,
Laying her whole side on the sea
As a leaping fish does; from the lee
Into the weather, cut somehow
Her sparkling path beneath our bow;
And so went off, as with a bound,
Into the rose and golden half
Of the sky, to overtake the sun,
And reach the shore, like the sea-calf
Its singing cave; yet I caught one

Glance ere away the boat quite passed,
And neither time nor toil could mar
Those features: so I saw the last
Of Waring!"—You? Oh, never star
Was lost here, but it rose afar!
Look East, where whole new thousands are!
In Vishnu-land what Avatar?

Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli

I know a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives
First when he visits, last, too, when he leaves
The world; and, vainly favoured, it repays
The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze
By no change of its large calm front of snow.
And underneath the Mount, a Flower I know,
He cannot have perceived, that changes ever
At his approach; and, in the lost endeavour
To live his life, has parted, one by one,
With all a flower's true graces, for the grace
Of being but a foolish mimic sun,
With ray-like florets round a disk-like face.
Men nobly call by many a name the Mount,
As over many a land of theirs its large
Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe
Is reared, and still with old names, fresh ones vie,

Each to its proper praise and own account:
Men call the Flower, the Sunflower, sportively.

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look
Across the waters to this twilight nook,
—The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook!

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed?
Go! Saying ever as thou dost proceed,
That I, French Rudel, choose for my device
A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice
Before its idol. See! These inexpert
And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt
The woven picture; 'tis a woman's skill
Indeed; but nothing baffled me, so, ill
Or well, the work is finished. Say, men feed
On songs I sing, and therefore bask the bees
On my flower's breast as on a platform broad:
But, as the flower's concern is not for these
But solely for the sun, so men applaud
In vain this Rudel, he not looking here
But to the East—the East! Go, say this, Pilgrim dear!

Cristina

She should never have looked at me,
If she meant I should not love her!
There are plenty . . . men, you call such,
I suppose . . . she may discover
All her soul to, if she pleases,
And yet leave much as she found them:
But I'm not so, and she knew it
When she fixed me, glancing round them.

What? To fix me thus meant nothing?
But I can't tell . . . there's my weakness . . .
What her look said!—no vile cant, sure,
About "need to strew the bleakness
Of some lone shore with its pearl-seed,
That the Sea feels"—no "strange yearning
That such souls have, most to lavish
Where there's chance of least returning".

Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows!
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit's true endowments

Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

There are flashes struck from midnights,
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honours perish,
Whereby swoln ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse,
Which for once had play unstifled,
Seems the sole work of a life-time
That away the rest have trifled.

Doubt you if, in some such moment,
As she fixed me, she felt clearly,
Ages past the soul existed,
Here an age 't is resting merely,
And hence, fleets again for ages:
While the true end, sole and single,
It stops here for is, this love-way,
With some other soul to mingle?

Else it loses what it lived for,
And eternally must lose it;
Better ends may be in prospect,
Deeper blisses, if you choose it,
But this life's end and this love-bliss
Have been lost here. Doubt you whether
This she felt, as, looking at me,
Mine and her soul rushed together?

Oh, observe! Of course, next moment,
The world's honours, in derision,
Trampled out the light for ever:
Never fear but there's provision
Of the Devil's to quench knowledge
Lest we walk the earth in rapture!
—Making those who catch God's secret
Just so much more prize their capture.

Such am I: the secret's mine now!
She has lost me—I have gained her!
Her soul's mine: and, thus, grown perfect,
I shall pass my life's remainder,
Life will just hold out the proving
Both our powers, alone and blended—
And then, come the next life quickly!
This world's use will have been ended.

Johannes Agricola in Meditation

FROM "MADHOUSE CELLS"

There 's Heaven above, and night by night,
I look right thro' its gorgeous roof;
No suns and moons, tho' e'er so bright,
Avail to stop me; splendour-proof,
I keep the broods of stars aloof:
For I intend to get to God,
For 't is to God I speed so fast,
For in God's breast, my own abode,
Those shoals of dazzling glory past,
I lay my spirit down at last.
I lie where I have always lain,
God smiles as he has always smiled;
Ere suns and moons could wax and wane,
Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled
The Heavens, God thought on me his child;
Ordained a life for me, arrayed
Its circumstances, every one
To the minutest; ay, God said
This head this hand should rest upon
Thus, ere he fashioned star or sun.

And having thus created me,
Thus rooted me, he bade me grow,
Guiltless for ever, like a tree
That buds and blooms, nor seeks to know
The law by which it prospers so:
But sure that thought and word and deed
All go to swell his love for me,
Me, made because that love had need
Of something irrevocably
Pledged solely its content to be.
Yes, yes, a tree which must ascend,—
No poison-gourd foredoomed to stoop!
I have God's warrant, could I blend
All hideous sins, as in a cup,
To drink the mingled venoms up,
Secure my nature will convert
The draught to blossoming gladness fast,
While sweet dews turn to the gourd's hurt,
And bloat, and while they bloat it, blast,
As from the first its lot was cast.
For as I lie, smiled on, full fed
By unexhausted power to bless,
I gaze below on Hell's fierce bed,
And those its waves of flame oppress,
Swarming in ghastly wretchedness;
Whose life on earth aspired to be
One altar-smoke, so pure!—to win
If not love like God's love to me,
At least to keep his anger in,

And all their striving turned to sin!
Priest, doctor, hermit, monk grown white
With prayer, the broken-hearted nun,
  The martyr, the wan acolyte,
The incense-swinging child,—undone
Before God fashioned star or sun!
God, whom I praise, how could I praise,
  If such as I might understand,
Make out, and reckon on, his ways,
  And bargain for his love, and stand,
  Paying a price, at his right hand?

Through the Metidja to Abd-el-Kadr 1842

As I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,
As I ride, as I ride,
That, as I were double-eyed,
He, in whom our Tribes confide,
Is descried, ways untried,
As I ride, as I ride.

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride?
Or are witnesses denied—
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied
As I ride, as I ride?

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)

O'er each visioned Homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied?)
To reside—where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,
Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,
—Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed—
How has vied stride with stride
As I ride, as I ride!

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I loose what Fate has tied,
Ere I pried, she should hide,
As I ride, as I ride,
All that's meant me: satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride
Stop veins I'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride!

The Pied Piper of Hamelin; A Child's Story

(WRITTEN FOR, AND INSCRIBED TO, W. M. THE YOUNGER.)

I

Hamelin Town's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover City;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its wall on the southern side;
A pleasanter spot you never spied;
But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin, was a pity.

II

Rats!
They fought the dogs, and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cook's own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,

And even spoiled the women's chats,
By drowning their speaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.

III

At last the people in a body
To the Town Hall came flocking:
"'Tis clear," cried they, "our Mayor 's a noddy;
And as for our Corporation—shocking
To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
For dolts that can't or won't determine
What 's best to rid us of our vermin!
You hope, because you 're old and obese,
To find in the furry civic robe ease?
Rouse up, Sirs! Give your brains a racking
To find the remedy we 're lacking,
Or, sure as fate, we 'll send you packing!"
At this the Mayor and Corporation
Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV

An hour they sate in council,
At length the Mayor broke silence:
"For a guilder I 'd my ermine gown sell;
I wish I were a mile hence!

It 's easy to bid one rack one's brain—
I 'm sure my poor head aches again
I 've scratched it so, and all in vain.
Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap!"
Just as he said this, what should hap
At the chamber door but a gentle tap?
"Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what 's
that?"
(With the Corporation as he sat,
Looking little though wondrous fat;
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
Than a too-long-opened oyster,
Save when at noon his paunch grew
mutinous
For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)
"Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?
Anything like the sound of a rat
Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

V

"Come in!"—the Mayor cried, looking
bigger:
And in did come the strangest figure!
His queer long coat from heel to head
Was half of yellow and half of red;
And he himself was tall and thin,
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,

But lips where smiles went out and in—
There was no guessing his kith and kin!
And nobody could enough admire
The tall man and his quaint attire:
Quoth one: "It's as my great-grandsire,
Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
Had walked this way from his painted
tomb-stone!"

VI

He advanced to the council-table:
And, "Please your honours," said he,
"I'm able,
By means of a secret charm, to draw
All creatures living beneath the sun,
That creep, or swim, or fly, or run,
After me so as you never saw!
And I chiefly use my charm
On creatures that do people harm,
The mole, and toad, and newt, and viper;
And people call me the Pied Piper."
(And here they noticed round his neck
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
To match with his coat of the self-same
cheque;
And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;

And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying
As if impatient to be playing
Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)
"Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am,
In Tartary I freed the Cham,
Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats;
I eased in Asia the Nizam
Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats:
And, as for what your brain bewilders,
If I can rid your town of rats
Will you give me a thousand guilders?"
"One? fifty thousand!"—was the exclamation
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

VII

Into the street the Piper stept,
Smiling first a little smile,
As if he knew what magic slept
In his quiet pipe the while;
Then, like a musical adept,
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled
Like a candle flame where salt is sprinkled;
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered;

And the muttering grew to a grumbling;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling;
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.
Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
Families by tens and dozens,
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—
Followed the Piper for their lives.
From street to street he piped advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing,
Until they came to the river Weser,
Wherein all plunged and perished
—Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar.
Swam across and lived to carry
(As he the manuscript he cherished)
To Rat-land home his commentary,
Which was, "At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
Into a cider-press's gripe:
And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,
And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,

And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks:
And it seemed as if a voice
(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
Is breathed) called out, Oh rats, rejoice!
The world is grown to one vast drysaltery!
So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon!
And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
All ready staved, like a great sun shone
Glorious scarce an inch before me,
Just as methought it said, Come, bore me!
—I found the Weser rolling o'er me."

VIII

You should have heard the Hamelin people
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple;
"Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles!
Poke out the nests and block up the holes!
Consult with carpenters and builders,
And leave in our town not even a trace
Of the rats!"—when suddenly up the face
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
With a, "First, if you please, my thousand guilders!"

IX

A thousand guilders! The Mayor looked
blue;
So did the Corporation too.
For council dinners made rare havock
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock;
And half the money would replenish
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
With a gipsy coat of red and yellow!
"Beside," quoth the Mayor with a know-
ing wink,
"Our business was done at the river's
brink;
We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
And what's dead can't come to life, I
think.
So friend, we're not the folks to shrink
From the duty of giving you something
for drink,
And a matter of money to put in your
poke;
But, as for the guilders, what we spoke
Of them, as you very well know, was in
joke.
Beside, our losses have made us thrifty;
A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!"

X

The piper's face fell, and he cried,
"No trifling! I can't wait, beside!
I've promised to visit by dinner-time
Bagdat, and accept the prime
Of the Head Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
Of a nest of scorpions no survivor—
With him I proved no bargain-driver,
With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!
And folks who put me in a passion
May find me pipe to another fashion."

XI

"How?" cried the Mayor, "d'ye think I'll brook
Being worse treated than a Cook?
Insulted by a lazy ribald
With idle pipe and vesture piebald?
You threaten us, fellow? Do your worst,
Blow your pipe there till you burst!"

XII

Once more he stept into the street;
And to his lips again
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane;

And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning
Never gave the enraptured air)
There was a rustling, that seemed like a bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
Little hands clapping, and little tongues chattering,
And, like fowls in a farmyard when barley is scattering,
Out came the children running.
All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

XIII

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
Unable to move a step, or cry
To the children merrily skipping by—
And could only follow with the eye

That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
But how the Mayor was on the rack,
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
As the Piper turned from the High Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and daughters!
However he turned from South to West,
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,
And after him the children pressed;
Great was the joy in every breast.
"He never can cross that mighty top!
He's forced to let the piping drop,
And we shall see our children stop!"
When, lo, as they reached the mountain's side,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;
And the Piper advanced and the children followed,
And when all were in to the very last,
The door in the mountain side shut fast.
Did I say, all? No! One was lame,
And could not dance the whole of the way;
And in after years, if you would blame
His sadness, he was used to say,—
"It's dull in our town since my playmates left!

I can't forget that I 'm bereft
Of all the pleasant sights they see,
Which the Piper also promised me;
For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,
Joining the town and just at hand,
Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew,
And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
And everything was strange and new;
The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,
And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
And honey-bees had lost their stings,
And horses were born with eagles' wings;
And just as I became assured
My lame foot would be speedily cured,
The music stopped and I stood still,
And found myself outside the Hill,
Left alone against my will,
To go now limping as before,
And never hear of that country more!"

XIV

Alas, alas for Hamelin!
There came into many a burgher's pate
A text which says, that Heaven's Gate
Opes to the Rich at as easy rate
As the needle's eye takes a camel in!
The Mayor sent East, West, North, and South
To offer the Piper by word of mouth,

Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
Silver and gold to his heart's content,
If he 'd only return the way he went,
And bring the children behind him.
But when they saw 't was a lost endeavour,
And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,
They made a decree that lawyers never
Should think their records dated duly
If, after the day of the month and year,
These words did not as well appear,
"And so long after what happened here
On the Twenty-second of Júly,
Thirteen hundred and Seventy-six";
And the better in memory to fix
The place of the Children's last retreat,
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
Was sure for the future to lose his labour.
Nor suffered they Hostelry or Tavern
To shock with mirth a street so solemn;
But opposite the place of the cavern
They wrote the story on a column,
And on the Great Church Window painted
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away;
And there it stands to this very day.
And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there 's a tribe
Of alien people that ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress

On which their neighbours lay such stress,
To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some subterranean prison
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why, they don't understand.

XV

So, Willy, let you and me be wipers
Of scores out with all men — especially pipers:
And, whether they pipe us free fróm rats or fróm mice,
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise.

"How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix." [16—.]

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
"Good speed!" cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew;
"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

'T was moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see;
At Düffeld, 't was morning as plain as could be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,
So Joris broke silence with, "Yet there is time!"

At Aerschot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray;

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;

And one eye's black intelligence,—ever
that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned: and cried Joris, "Stay spur!
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her;
We'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff;

Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

Then I cast loose my buff-coat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

And all I remember is, friends flocking
round
As I sate with his head 'twixt my knees
on the ground,
And no voice but was praising this Ro-
land of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last
measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common
consent)
Was no more than his due who brought
good news from Ghent.

The Lost Mistress

All 's over, then—does truth sound bitter
As one at first believes?
Hark, 't is the sparrows' good-night twitter
About your cottage eaves!

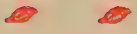
And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,
I noticed that, to-day;
One day more bursts them open fully
—You know the red turns gray.

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest?
May I take your hand in mine?
Mere friends are we,—well, friends the merest
Keep much that I 'll resign.

For each glance of that eye so bright and black,
Though I keep with heart's endeavour,—
Your voice, when you wish the snow-drops back,
Though it stays in my soul for ever!—

—Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
Or only a thought stronger;
I will hold your hand but as long as all may,
Or so very little longer!

Home-Thoughts, from Abroad



Oh, to be in England
Now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England
Sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now!

And after April, when May follows,
And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows—
Hark! where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush; he sings each song twice over,

Lest you should think he never could re-
capture
The first fine careless rapture!
And though the fields look rough with
hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes
anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower,
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-
flower!

Home-Thoughts, from the Sea

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the north-west died away;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay;
Bluish mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay:
In the dimmest north-east distance, dawned Gibraltar grand and gray.
"Here and here did England help me,—how can I help England?"—say,
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

Garden-Fancies

I—THE FLOWER'S NAME

Here's the garden she walked across,
Arm in my arm, such a short while since:
Hark, now I push its wicket, the moss
Hinders the hinges and makes them wince!
She must have reached this shrub ere she turned,
As back with that murmur the wicket swung;
For she laid the poor snail, my chance foot spurned,
To feed and forget it the leaves among.

Down this side of the gravel-walk
She went while her robe's-edge brushed the box:
And here she paused in her gracious talk
To point me a moth on the milk-white flox.

Roses, ranged in valiant row,
I will never think that she passed you by!
She loves you noble roses, I know;
But yonder, see, where the rock-plants lie!

This flower she stopped at, finger on lip,
Stooped over, in doubt, as settling its claim;
Till she gave me, with pride to make no slip,
Its soft meandering Spanish name.
What a name! was it love, or praise?
Speech half-asleep, or song half-awake?
I must learn Spanish, one of these days,
Only for that slow sweet name's sake.

Roses, if I live and do well,
I may bring her, one of these days,
To fix you fast with as fine a spell,
Fit you each with his Spanish phrase!
But do not detain me now; for she lingers
There, like sunshine over the ground,
And ever I see her soft white fingers
Searching after the bud she found.

Flower, you Spaniard, look that you grow not,
Stay as you are and be loved for ever!

Bud, if I kiss you 't is that you blow not,
Mind, the shut pink mouth opens never!
For while thus it pouts, her fingers wrestle,
Twinkling the audacious leaves between,
Till round they turn and down they nestle—
Is not the dear mark still to be seen?

Where I find her not, beauties vanish;
Whither I follow her, beauties flee;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
June 's twice June since she breathed it with me?
Come, bud, show me the least of her traces,
Treasure my lady's lightest foot-fall
Ah, you may flout and turn up your faces—
Roses, you are not so fair after all!

II—SIBRANDUS SCHAFNABURGENSIS

Plague take all your pedants, say I!
He who wrote what I hold in my hand
Centuries back was so good as to die,
Leaving this rubbish to cumber the land;
This, that was a book in its time,
Printed on paper and bound in leather,
Last month in the white of a matin-prime
Just when the birds sang all together.

Into the garden I brought it to read,
And under the arbute and laurustine
Read it, so help me grace in my need,
From title-page to closing line.
Chapter on chapter did I count,
As a curious traveller counts Stonehenge;
Added up the mortal amount;
And then proceeded to my revenge.

Yonder's a plum-tree, with a crevice
An owl would build in, were he but sage;
For a lap of moss, like a fine pont-levis
In a castle of the middle age,
Joins to a lip of gum, pure amber;
When he'd be private, there might he spend
Hours alone in his lady's chamber:
Into this crevice I dropped our friend.

Splash went he, as under he ducked,
—I knew at the bottom rain-drippings stagnate;
Next a handful of blossoms I plucked
To bury him with, my bookshelf's magnate;
Then I went in-doors, brought out a loaf,
Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis;
Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais.

Now, this morning, betwixt the moss
And gum that locked our friend in limbo,
A spider had spun his web across,
And sate in the midst with arms a-kimbo;
So, I took pity, for learning's sake,
And, *de profundis, accentibus lætis,*
Cantate! quoth I, as I got a rake,
And up I fished his delectable treatise.

Here you have it, dry in the sun,
With all the binding all of a blister,
And great blue spots where the ink has run,
And reddish streaks that wink and glister
O'er the page so beautifully yellow—
Oh, well have the droppings played their tricks!
Did he guess how toadstools grow, this fellow?
Here 's one stuck in his chapter six!

How did he like it when the live creatures
Tickled and toused and browsed him all over,
And worm, slug, eft, with serious features,
Came in, each one, for his right of trover;

When the water-beetle with great blind deaf face
Made of her eggs the stately deposit,
And the newt borrowed just so much of the preface
As tiled in the top of his black wife's closet.

All that life, and fun, and romping,
All that frisking, and twisting, and coupling,
While slowly our poor friend's leaves were swamping,
And clasps were cracking, and covers suppling!
As if you had carried sour John Knox
To the play-house at Paris, Vienna, or Munich,
Fastened him into a front-row box,
And danced off the Ballet with trousers and tunic?

Come, old martyr! What, torment enough is it?
Back to my room shall you take your sweet self!
Good-bye, mother-beetle; husband-eft, *sufficit!*
See the snug niche I have made on my shelf:

A.'s book shall prop you up, B.'s shall
cover you,
Here's C. to be grave with, or D. to be
gay,
And with E. on each side, and F. right
over you,
Dry-rot at ease till the Judgment-day!

The Flight of the Duchess

I

You 're my friend:
I was the man the Duke spoke to;
I helped the Duchess to cast off his yoke too;
So, here 's the tale from beginning to end,
My friend!

II

Ours is a great wild country:
If you climb to our castle's top,
I don't see where your eye can stop;
For when you 've passed the corn-field country,
Where vineyards leave off, flocks are packed,
And sheep-range leads to cattle-tract,
And cattle-tract to open-chase,
And open-chase to the very base
Of the mountain, where, at a funeral pace,
Round about, solemn and slow,
One by one, row after row,
Up and up the pine-trees go,
So, like black priests up, and so

Down the other side again
To another greater, wilder country,
That 's one vast red drear burnt-up plain,
Branched thro' and thro' with many a vein
Whence iron 's dug, and copper 's dealt;
Look right, look left, look straight before,—
Beneath they mine, above they smelt,
Copper-ore and iron-ore,
And forge and furnace mould and melt,
And so on, more and ever more,
Till, at the last, for a bounding belt,
Comes the salt sand hoar of the great sea-shore,
—And the whole is our Duke's country!

III

I was born the day this present Duke was—
(And O, says the song, ere I was old!)
In the castle where the other Duke was—
(When I was hopeful and young, not old!)
I in the Kennel, he in the Bower:
We are of like age to an hour.
My father was Huntsman in that day;
Who has not heard my father say
That, when a boar was brought to bay,
Three times, four times out of five,
With his huntspear he 'd contrive

To get the killing-place transfixed,
And pin him true, both eyes betwixt?
And that 's why the old Duke had rather
Have lost a salt-pit than my father,
And loved to have him ever in call;
That 's why my father stood in the hall
When the old Duke brought his infant out
To show the people, and while they passed
The wondrous bantling round about,
Was first to start at the outside blast
As the Kaiser's courier blew his horn,
Just a month after the babe was born.
"And" quoth the Kaiser's courier, "since
The Duke has got an Heir, our Prince
Needs the Duke's self at his side:"
The Duke looked down and seemed to wince,
But he thought of wars o'er the world wide,
Castles a-fire, men on their march,
The toppling tower, the crashing arch;
And up he looked, and awhile he eyed
The row of crests and shields and banners,
Of all achievements after all manners,
And "Ay," said the Duke with a surly pride.
The more was his comfort when he died
At next year's end, in a velvet suit,

With a gilt glove on his hand, and his foot
In a silken shoe for a leather boot,
Petticoated like a herald,
In a chamber next to an ante-room,
Where he breathed the breath of page and groom,
What he called stink, and they, perfume:
—They should have set him on red Berold,
Mad with pride, like fire to manage!
They should have got his cheek fresh tannage
Such a day as to-day in the merry sunshine!
Had they stuck on his fist a rough-foot merlin!
—Hark, the wind's on the heath at its game!
Oh for a noble falcon-lanner
To flap each broad wing like a banner,
And turn in the wind, and dance like flame!
Had they broached a cask of white beer from Berlin!
—Or if you incline to prescribe mere wine—
Put to his lips when they saw him pine,
A cup of our own Moldavia fine,
Cotnar, for instance, green as May sorrel,
And ropy with sweet,—we shall not quarrel.

IV

So, at home, the sick tall yellow Duchess
Was left with the infant in her clutches,
She being the daughter of God knows
who:
And now was the time to revisit her
tribe,
So, abroad and afar they went, the two,
And let our people rail and gibe
At the empty Hall and extinguished fire,
As loud as we liked, but ever in vain,
Till after long years we had our desire,
And back came the Duke and his mother
again.

V

And he came back the pertest little ape
That ever affronted human shape;
Full of his travel, struck at himself—
You'd say, he despised our bluff old ways
—Not he! For in Paris they told the elf
That our rough North land was the land
of Lays,
The one good thing left in evil days;
Since the Mid-Age was the Heroic Time,
And only in wild nooks like ours
Could you taste of it yet as in its prime,
And see true castles, with proper towers,
Young-hearted women, old-minded men,
And manners now as manners were then.

So, all that the old Dukes had been, without knowing it,
This Duke would fain know he was, without being it;
'T was not for the joy's self, but the joy of his showing it,
Nor for the pride's self, but the pride of our seeing it,
He revived all usages thoroughly worn-out,
The souls of them fumed-forth, the hearts of them torn-out:
And chief in the chase his neck he perilled,
On a lathy horse, all legs and length,
With blood for bone, all speed, no strength;
—They should have set him on red Berold,
With the red eye slow consuming in fire,
And the thin stiff ear like an abbey spire!

VI

Well, such as he was, he must marry, we heard:
And out of a convent, at the word,
Came the Lady, in time of spring.
—Oh, old thoughts they cling, they cling!
That day, I know, with a dozen oaths,
I clad myself in thick hunting-clothes,
Fit for the chase of urox or buffle
In winter-time when you need to muffle;

But the Duke had a mind we should cut
a figure,
And so we saw the Lady arrive:
My friend, I have seen a white crane
bigger!
She was the smallest lady alive,
Made, in a piece of Nature's madness,
Too small, almost, for the life and glad-
ness
That over-filled her, as some hive
Out of the bears' reach on the high trees
Is crowded with its safe merry bees:
In truth, she was not hard to please!
Up she looked, down she looked, round
at the mead,
Straight at the castle, that's best indeed
To look at from outside the walls:
As for us, styled the "serfs and thralls",
She as much thanked me as if she had
said it,
(With her eyes, do you understand?)
Because I patted her horse while I led it;
And Max, who rode on her other hand,
Said, no bird flew past but she enquired
What its true name was, nor ever seemed
tired—
If that was an eagle she saw hover,—
If the green and gray bird on the field
was the plover.
When suddenly appeared the Duke:

And as down she sprung, the small foot pointed
On to my hand,—as with a rebuke,
And as if his backbone were not jointed,
The Duke stepped rather aside than forward,
And welcomed her with his grandest smile;
And, mind you, his mother all the while
Chilled in the rear, like a wind to Nor'ward;
And up, like a weary yawn, with its pulleys
Went, in a shriek, the rusty portcullis;
And, like a glad sky the north-wind sullies,
The Lady's face stopped its play,
As if her first hair had grown grey—
For such things must begin some one day!

VII

In a day or two she was well again;
As who should say, "You labour in vain!
This is all a jest against God, who meant
I should ever be, as I am, content
And glad in his sight; therefore, glad I will be!"
So, smiling as at first went she.

VIII

She was active, stirring, all fire—
Could not rest, could not tire—
To a stone she had given life!
(I myself loved once, in my day.)
—For a Shepherd's, Miner's, Huntsman's wife,
(I had a wife, I know what I say,)
Never in all the world such an one;
And here was plenty to be done,
And she that could do it, great or small,
She was to do nothing at all.
There was already this man in his post,
This in his station, and that in his office,
And the Duke's plan admitted a wife, at most,
To meet his eye, with the other trophies,
Now outside the Hall, now in it,
To sit thus, stand thus, see and be seen,
At the proper place in the proper minute,
And die away the life between.
And it was amusing enough, each infraction
Of rule (but for after-sadness that came)—
To hear the consummate self-satisfaction
With which the young Duke and the old Dame
Would let her advise, and criticise,
And, being a fool, instruct the wise,
And, child-like, parcel out praise or blame.

They bore it all in complacent guise,
As tho' an artificer, after contriving
A wheel-work image as if it were living,
Should find with delight it could motion
to strike him!
So found the Duke, and his mother like
him.
The Lady hardly got a rebuff—
That had not been contemptuous enough,
With his cursed smirk, as he nodded
applause,
And kept off the old mother-cat's claws.

IX

So, the little Lady grew silent and thin,
Paling and ever paling,
As the way is with a hid chagrin;
And the Duke perceived that she was
ailing,
And said in his heart, "'T is done to spite
me,
But I shall find in my power to right
me!"
Don't swear, friend—the Old One, many
a year,
Is in Hell, and the Duke's self . . . you
shall hear.

X

Well, early in autumn, at first winter-warning,
When the stag had to break with his foot, of a morning,
A drinking-hole out of the fresh tender ice
That covered the pond till the sun, in a trice,
Loosening it, let out a ripple of gold,
And another and another, and faster and faster,
Till, dimpling to blindness, the wide water rolled:
Then it so chanced that the Duke our master
Asked himself what were the pleasures in season,
And found, since the calendar bade him be hearty,
He should do the Middle Age no treason
In resolving on a hunting-party,
Always provided old books showed the way of it!
What meant old poets by their strictures?
And when old poets had said their say of it,
How taught old painters in their pictures?
We must revert to the proper channels,
Workings in tapestry, paintings on panels,

And gather up Woodcraft's authentic traditions:
Here was food for our various ambitions,
As on each case, exactly stated.
—To encourage your dog, now, the properest chirrup,
Or best prayer to St. Hubert on mounting your stirrup—
We of the household took thought and debated.
Blessed was he whose back ached with the jerkin
His sire was wont to do forest-work in;
Blesseder he who nobly sunk "ohs"
And "ahs" while he tugged on his grandsire's trunkhose;
What signified hats if they had no rims on,
Each slouching before and behind like the scallop,
And able to serve at sea for a shallop,
Loaded with lacquer and looped with crimson?
So that the deer now, to make a short rhyme on 't,
What with our Venerers, Prickers, and Verderers,
Might hope for real hunters at length, and not murderers,
And oh, the Duke's tailor—he had a hot time on 't!

XI

Now you must know, that when the first dizziness
Of flap-hats and buff-coats and jack-boots subsided,
The Duke put this question, "The Duke's part provided,
Had not the Duchess some share in the business?"
For out of the mouth of two or three witnesses,
Did he establish all fit-or-unfitnesses:
And, after much laying of heads together,
Somebody's cap got a notable feather
By the announcement with proper unction
That he had discovered the lady's function;
Since ancient authors held this tenet,
"When horns wind a mort and the deer is at siege,
Let the dame of the Castle prick forth on her jennet,
And with water to wash the hands of her liege
In a clean ewer with a fair towelling,
Let her preside at the disembowelling".
Now, my friend, if you had so little religion
As to catch a hawk, some falcon-lanner,
And thrust her broad wings like a banner

Into a coop for a vulgar pigeon;
And if day by day, and week by week,
You cut her claws, and sealed her eyes,
And clipped her wings, and tied her beak,
Would it cause you any great surprise
If when you decided to give her an airing
You found she needed a little preparing?
—I say, should you be such a curmudgeon,
If she clung to the perch, as to take it in dudgeon?
Yet when the Duke to his Lady signified,
Just a day before, as he judged most dignified,
In what a pleasure she was to participate,—
And, instead of leaping wide in flashes,
Her eyes just lifted their long lashes,
As if pressed by fatigue even he could not dissipate,
And duly acknowledged the Duke's forethought,
But spoke of her health, if her health were worth aught,
Of the weight by day and the watch by night,
And much wrong now that used to be right,
So, thanking him, declined the hunting,—
Was conduct ever more affronting?
With all the ceremony settled—

With the towel ready, and the sewer
Polishing up his oldest ewer,
And the jennet pitched upon, a piebald,
Black-barred, cream-coated and pink eye-ball'd,—
No wonder if the Duke was nettled!
And when she persisted nevertheless,—
Well, I suppose, here's the time to confess
That there ran half round our Lady's chamber
A balcony none of the hardest to clamber;
And that Jacynth the tire-woman, ready in waiting,
Stayed in call outside, what need of relating?
And since Jacynth was like a June rose, why, a fervent
Adorer of Jacynth, of course, was your servant;
And if she had the habit to peep through the casement,
How could I keep at any vast distance?
And so, as I say, on the Lady's persistence,
The Duke, dumb-stricken with amazement,
Stood for a while in a sultry smother,
And then, with a smile that partook of the awful,

Turned her over to his yellow mother
To learn what was decorous and lawful;
And the mother smelt blood with a cat-
like instinct,
As her cheek quick whitened thro' all its
quince-tinct—
Oh, but the Lady heard the whole truth
at once!
What meant she?—Who was she?—Her
duty and station,
The wisdom of age and the folly of
youth, at once,
Its decent regard and its fitting relation—
In brief, my friend, set all the devils in
hell free
And turn them out to carouse in a belfry,
And treat the priests to a fifty-part canon,
And then you may guess how that tongue
of hers ran on!
Well, somehow or other it ended at last
And, licking her whiskers, out she passed;
And after her,—making (he hoped) a face
Like Emperor Nero or Sultan Saladin,
Stalked the Duke's self with the austere
grace
Of ancient hero or modern paladin,—
From door to staircase—oh, such a solemn
Unbending of the vertebral column!

XII

However, at sunrise our company mustered,
And here was the huntsman bidding unkennel,
And there 'neath his bonnet the pricker blustered,
With feather dank as a bough of wet fennel;
For the court-yard's four walls were filled with fog
You might cut as an axe chops a log—
Like so much wool for colour and bulkiness;
And out rode the Duke in a perfect sulkiness,
Since, before breakfast, a man feels but queasily,
And a sinking at the lower abdomen
Begins the day with indifferent omen:
And lo, as he looked around uneasily,
The sun ploughed the fog up and drove it asunder
This way and that from the valley under;
And, looking thro' the court-yard arch,
Down in the valley, what should meet him
But a troop of Gypsies on their march,
No doubt with the annual gifts to greet him.

XIII

Now, in your land, Gypsies reach you, only
After reaching all lands beside;
North they go, south they go, trooping or lonely,
And still, as they travel far and wide,
Catch they and keep now a trace here, a trace there,
That puts you in mind of a place here, a place there:
But with us, I believe they rise out of the ground,
And nowhere else, I take it, are found
With the earth-tint yet so freshly embrowned;
Born, no doubt, like insects which breed on
The very fruit they are meant to feed on:
For the earth—not a use to which they don't turn it,
The ore that grows in the mountain's womb,
Or the sand in the pits like a honeycomb,
They sift and soften it, bake it and burn it—
Whether they weld you, for instance, a snaffle
With side-bars never a brute can baffle;

Or a lock that's a puzzle of wards within
wards;
Or, if your colt's fore-foot inclines to curve
inwards,
Horseshoes they'll hammer which turn
on a swivel
And won't allow the hoof to shrivel;
Then they cast bells like the shell of a
winkle,
That keep a stout heart in the ram with
their tinkle:
But the sand—they pitch and pound it
like otters;
Commend me to Gypsy glass-makers and
potters!
Glasses they'll blow you, crystal-clear,
Where just a faint cloud of rose shall
appear,
As if in pure water you dropped and let
die
A bruised black-blooded mulberry;
And that other sort, their crowning pride,
With long white threads distinct inside,
Like the lake-flower's fibrous roots which
dangle
Loose such a length and never tangle,
Where the bold sword-lily cuts the clear
waters,
And the cup-lily couches with all the white
daughters.

Such are the works they put their hand to,
And the uses they turn and twist iron and
sand to.
And these made the troop which our
Duke saw sally
Towards his castle from out of the valley,
Men and women, like new-hatched spiders,
Come out with the morning to greet our
riders;
And up they wound till they reached the
ditch,
Whereat all stopped save one, a witch,
That I knew, as she hobbled from the
group,
By her gait, directly, and her stoop,
I, whom Jacynth was used to importune
To let that same witch tell us our for-
tune.
The oldest Gypsy then above ground;
And, so sure as the autumn season came
round,
She paid us a visit for profit or pastime,
And every time, as she swore, for the last
time.
And presently she was seen to sidle
Up to the Duke till she touched his bridle,
So that the horse of a sudden reared up
As under its nose the old witch peered up
With her worn-out eyes, or rather eye-
holes,

Of no use now but to gather brine,
And began a kind of level whine,
Such as they used to sing to their viols
When their ditties they go grinding
Up and down with nobody minding:
And, then as of old, at the end of the humming
Her usual presents were forthcoming
—A dog-whistle blowing the fiercest of trebles,
(Just a sea-shore stone holding a dozen fine pebbles,)
Or a porcelain mouth-piece to screw on a pipe-end,—
And so she awaited her annual stipend.
But this time, the Duke would scarcely vouchsafe
A word in reply; and in vain she felt
With twitching fingers at her belt
For the purse of sleek pine-martin pelt,
Ready to put what he gave in her pouch safe,—
Till, either to quicken his apprehension,
Or possibly with an after-intention,
She was come, she said, to pay her duty
To the new Duchess, the youthful beauty.
No sooner had she named his Lady,
Than a shine lit up the face so shady,
And its smirk returned with a novel meaning—

For it struck him, the babe just wanted
weaning;
If one gave her a taste of what life was
and sorrow,
She, foolish to-day, would be wiser to-
morrow:
And who so fit a teacher of trouble
As this sordid crone bent well-nigh double?
So, glancing at her wolf-skin vesture,
(If such it was, for they grow so hirsute
That their own fleece serves for natural
fur suit)
He was contrasting, 't was plain from his
gesture,
The life of the Lady, so flower-like and
delicate,
With the loathsome squalor of this helicat.
I, in brief, was the man the Duke beckoned
From out of the throng, and while I drew
near
He told the crone, as I since have reckoned
By the way he bent and spoke into her ear
With circumspection and mystery,
The main of the Lady's history,
Her frowardness and ingratitude;
And for all the crone's submissive attitude
I could see round her mouth the loose
plaits tightening,
And her brow with assenting intelligence
brightening,

As tho' she engaged with hearty good-will
Whatever he now might enjoin to fulfil,
And promised the Lady a thorough frightening.
And so, just giving her a glimpse
Of a purse, with the air of a man who imps
The wing of the hawk that shall fetch the hernshaw,
He bade me take the Gypsy mother
And set her telling some story or other
Of hill or dale, oak-wood or fernshaw,
To wile away a weary hour
For the Lady left alone in her bower,
Whose mind and body craved exertion
And yet shrank from all better diversion.

XIV

Then clapping heel to his horse, the mere curvetter,
Out rode the Duke, and after his hollo
Horses and hounds swept, huntsman and servitor,
And back I turned and bade the crone follow.
And what makes me confident what's to be told you,
Had all along been of this crone's devising,

Is, that, on looking round sharply, behold
you,
There was a novelty quick as surprising:
For, first, she had shot up a full head in
stature,
And her step kept pace with mine nor
faltered,
As if age had foregone its usurpature,
And the ignoble mien was wholly altered,
And the face looked quite another nature,
And the change reached too, whatever the
change meant,
Her shaggy wolf-skin cloak's arrangement,
For where its tatters hung loose like
sedges,
Gold coins were glittering on the edges,
Like the band-roll strung with tomans
Which proves the veil a Persian woman's:
And under her brow, like a snail's horns
newly
Come out as after the rain he paces,
Two unmistakeable eye-points duly
Live and aware looked out of their places.
So we went and found Jacynth at the entry
Of the Lady's chamber standing sentry;
I told the command and produced my
companion,
And Jacynth rejoiced to admit any one,
For since last night, by the same token,
Not a single word had the Lady spoken:

So they went in both to the presence
together,
While I in the balcony watched the weather.

XV

And now, what took place at the very
first of all,
I cannot tell, as I never could learn it:
Jacynth constantly wished a curse to fall
On that little head of hers and burn it,
If she knew how she came to drop so
soundly
Asleep of a sudden and there continue
The whole time sleeping as profoundly
As one of the boars my father would pin
you
'Twixt the eyes where the life holds gar-
rison,
—Jacynth forgive me the comparison!
But where I begin my own narration
Is a little after I took my station
To breathe the fresh air from the balcony,
And, having in those days a falcon eye,
To follow the hunt thro' the open country,
From where the bushes thinlier crested
The hillocks, to a plain where 's not one
tree:—
When, in a moment, my ear was arrested

By—was it singing, or was it saying,
Or a strange musical instrument playing
In the chamber?—and, to be certain,
I pushed the lattice, pulled the curtain,
And there lay Jacynth asleep,
Yet as if a watch she tried to keep,
In a rosy sleep along the floor,
With her head against the door;
While in the midst, on the seat of state,
Like a queen the Gypsy woman sate,
With head and face downbent
On the Lady's head and face intent,
For, coiled at her feet like a child at ease,
The Lady sate between her knees,
And o'er them the Lady's clasped hands met,
And on those hands her chin was set,
And her upturned face met the face of the crone
Wherein the eyes had grown and grown
As if she could double and quadruple
At pleasure the play of either pupil
—Very like by her hands slow fanning,
As up and down like a gor-crow's flappers
They moved to measure like bell clappers.
I said, "Is it blessing, is it banning,
Do they applaud you or burlesque you—
Those hands and fingers with no flesh on?"

When, just as I thought to spring in to
the rescue,
At once I was stopped by the Lady's ex-
pression:
For it was life her eyes were drinking
From the crone's wide pair above un-
winking,—
Life's pure fire received without shrinking,
Into the heart and breast whose heaving
Told you no single drop they were
leaving—
Life, that, filling her, passed redundant
Into her very hair, back swerving
Over each shoulder, loose and abundant,
As her head thrown back showed the white
throat curving,
And the very tresses shared in the pleasure,
Moving to the mystic measure,
Bounding as the bosom bounded.
I stopped short, more and more con-
founded,
As still her cheeks burned and eyes
glistened,
As she listened and she listened,—
When all at once a hand detained me,
And the self-same contagion gained me,
And I kept time to the wondrous chime,
Making out words and prose and rhyme,
Till it seemed that the music furled
Its wings like a task fulfilled, and dropped

From under the words it first had propped,
And left them midway in the world.
And word took word as hand takes hand,
I could hear at last, and understand;
And when I held the unbroken thread,
The Gypsy said:—

"And so at last we find my tribe,
And so I set thee in the midst,
And to one and all of them describe
What thou saidst and what thou didst,
Our long and terrible journey thro',
And all thou art ready to say and do
In the trials that remain:
I trace them the vein and the other vein
That meet on thy brow and part again,
Making our rapid mystic mark;
And I bid my people prove and probe
Each eye's profound and glorious globe
Till they detect the kindred spark
In those depths so dear and dark,
Like the spots that snap, and burst, and flee,
Circling over the midnight sea.
And on that young round cheek of thine
I make them recognise the tinge,
As when of the costly scarlet wine
They drip so much as will impinge
And spread in a thinnest scale afloat
One thick gold drop from the olive's coat
Over a silver plate whose sheen

Still thro' the mixture shall be seen.
For, so I prove thee, to one and all,
Fit, when my people ope their breast,
To see the sign, and hear the call,
And take the vow, and stand the test
Which adds one more child to the rest—
When the breast is bare and the arms are wide,
And the world is left outside.
For there is probation to decree,
And many and long must the trials be
Thou shalt victoriously endure,
If that brow is true and those eyes are sure;
Like a jewel-finder's fierce assay
Of the prize he dug from its mountain tomb,—
Let once the vindicating ray
Leap out amid the anxious gloom,
And steel and fire have done their part
And the prize falls on its finder's heart;
So, trial after trial past,
Wilt thou fall at the very last
Breathless, half in trance
With the thrill of the great deliverance,
Into our arms for evermore;
And thou shalt know, those arms once curled
About thee, what we knew before,
How love is the only good in the world.

Henceforth be loved as heart can love,
Or brain devise, or hand approve!
Stand up, look below,
It is our life at thy feet we throw
To step with into light and joy;
Not a power of life but we'll employ
To satisfy thy nature's want;
Art thou the tree that props the plant,
Or the climbing plant that seeks the tree—
Canst thou help us, must we help thee?
If any two creatures grew into one,
They would do more than the world has done;
Tho' each apart were never so weak,
Yet vainly thro' the world should ye seek
For the knowledge and the might
Which in such union grew their right:
So, to approach, at least, that end,
And blend,—as much as may be, blend
Thee with us, or us with thee,
As climbing-plant or propping-tree,
Shall some one deck thee, over and down,
Up and about, with blossoms and leaves?
Fix his heart's fruit for thy garland crown,
Cling with his soul as the gourd-vine cleaves,
Die on thy boughs and disappear
While not a leaf of thine is sere?
Or is the other fate in store,
And art thou fitted to adore,

To give thy wondrous self away,
And take a stronger nature's sway?
I foresee and I could foretell
Thy future portion, sure and well—
But those passionate eyes speak true, speak true,
And let them say what thou shalt do!
Only, be sure thy daily life,
In its peace, or in its strife,
Never shall be unobserved;
We pursue thy whole career,
And hope for it, or doubt, or fear,—
Lo, hast thou kept thy path or swerved,
We are beside thee, in all thy ways,
With our blame, with our praise,
Our shame to feel, our pride to show,
Glad, sorry—but indifferent, no!
Whether it is thy lot to go,
For the good of us all, where the haters meet
In the crowded city's horrible street;
Or thou step alone thro' the morass
Where never sound yet was
Save the dry quick clap of the stork's bill,
For the air is still, and the water still,
When the blue breast of the dipping coot
Dives under, and all again is mute.
So at the last shall come old age,
Decrepit as befits that stage;

How else wouldst thou retire apart
With the hoarded memories of thy heart,
And gather all to the very least
Of the fragments of life's earlier feast,
Let fall through eagerness to find
The crowning dainties yet behind?
Ponder on the entire past
Laid together thus at last,
When the twilight helps to fuse
The first fresh, with the faded hues,
And the outline of the whole,
As round eve's shades their framework roll,
Grandly fronts for once thy soul:
And then as, 'mid the dark, a gleam
Of yet another morning breaks,
And like the hand which ends a dream,
Death, with the might of his sunbeam,
Touches the flesh and the soul awakes,
Then—"

Ay, then, indeed, something would happen!
But what? For here her voice changed like a bird's;
There grew more of the music and less of the words;
Had Jacynth only been by me to clap pen
To paper and put you down every syllable,
With those clever clerkly fingers,
All that I've forgotten as well as what lingers

In this old brain of mine that 's but ill able
To give you even this poor version
Of the speech I spoil, as it were, with stammering
—More fault of those who had the hammering
Of prosody into me and syntax,
And did it, not with hobnails but tintacks!
But to return from this excursion,—
Just, do you mark, when the song was sweetest,
The peace most deep and the charm completest,
There came, shall I say, a snap—
And the charm vanished!
And my sense returned, so strangely banished,
And, starting as from a nap,
I knew the crone was bewitching my Lady,
With Jacynth asleep; and but one spring made I,
Down from the casement, round to the portal,
Another minute and I had entered,
When the door opened, and more than mortal
Stood, with a face where to my mind centred

All beauties I ever saw or shall see,
The Duchess—I stopped as if struck by palsy.
She was so different, happy and beautiful,
I felt at once that all was best,
And that I had nothing to do, for the rest,
But wait her commands, obey and be dutiful.
Not that, in fact, there was any commanding,
—I saw the glory of her eye,
And the brow's height and the breast's expanding,
And I was hers to live or to die.
As for finding what she wanted,
You know God Almighty granted
Such little signs should serve his wild creatures
To tell one another all their desires,
So that each knows what its friend requires,
And does its bidding without teachers
I preceded her; the crone
Followed silent and alone;
I spoke to her, but she merely jabbered
In the old style; both her eyes had slunk
Back to their pits; her stature shrunk;
In short, the soul in its body sunk
Like a blade sent home to its scabbard.

We descended, I preceding;
Crossed the court with nobody heeding;
All the world was at the chase,
The court-yard like a desert-place,
The stable emptied of its small fry;
I saddled myself the very palfrey
I remember patting while it carried her,
The day she arrived and the Duke married her.
And, do you know, though it's easy deceiving
Oneself in such matters, I can't help believing
The Lady had not forgotten it either,
And knew the poor devil so much beneath her
Would have been only too glad for her service
To dance on hot ploughshares like a Turk dervise,
But, unable to pay proper duty where owing it,
Was reduced to that pitiful method of showing it:
For though the moment I began setting
His saddle on my own nag of Berold's begetting,
(Not that I meant to be obtrusive)
She stopped me, while his rug was shifting,

By a single rapid finger's lifting,
And, with a gesture kind but conclusive,
And a little shake of the head, refused me,—
I say, although she never used me,
Yet when she was mounted, the Gypsy behind her,
And I ventured to remind her,
I suppose with a voice of less steadiness
Than usual, for my feeling exceeded me,
—Something to the effect that I was in readiness
Whenever God should please she needed me,—
Then, do you know, her face looked down on me
With a look that placed a crown on me,
And she felt in her bosom,—mark, her bosom,—
And, as a flower-tree drops its blossom,
Dropped me—ah, had it been a purse
Of silver, my friend, or gold, that's worse,
Why, you see, as soon as I found myself
So understood,—that a true heart so may gain
Such a reward,—I should have gone home again,
Kissed Jacynth, and soberly drowned myself!
It was a little plait of hair

Such as friends in a convent make
To wear, each for the other's sake,—
This, see, which at my breast I wear,
Ever did (rather to Jacynth's grudgment),
And ever shall, till the Day of Judgment.
And then,—and then,—to cut short,—this
is idle,
These are feelings it is not good to
foster,—
I pushed the gate wide, she shook the
bridle,
And the palfrey bounded,—and so we
lost her!

XVI

When the liquor's out, why clink the
cannikin?
I did think to describe you the panic in
The redoubtable breast of our master the
mannikin,
And what was the pitch of his mother's
yellowness,
How she turned as a shark to snap the
spare-rib
Clean off, sailors say, from a pearl-diving
Carib,
When she heard what she called the flight
of the feloness—
But it seems such child's play

What they said and did with the Lady
away!
And to dance on, when we've lost the
music,
Always made me—and no doubt makes
you—sick.
Nay, to my mind, the world's face looked
so stern
As that sweet form disappeared thro' the
postern,
She that kept it in constant good humour,
It ought to have stopped; there seemed
nothing to do more.
But the world thought otherwise and
went on,
And my head's one that its spite was
spent on:
Thirty years are fled since that morning,
And with them all my head's adorning.
Nor did the old Duchess die outright,
As you expect, of suppressed spite,
The natural end of every adder
Not suffered to empty its poison-bladder:
But she and her son agreed, I take it,
That no one should touch on the story to
wake it,
For the wound in the Duke's pride
rankled fiery,
So they made no search and small in-
quiry—

And when fresh Gypsies have paid us a visit, I 've
Noticed the couple were never inquisitive,
But told them they 're folks the Duke don't want here,
And bade them make haste and cross the frontier.
Brief, the Duchess was gone and the Duke was glad of it,
And the old one was in the young one's stead,
And took, in her place, the household's head,
And a blessed time the household had of it!
And were I not, as a man may say, cautious
How I trench, more than needs, on the nauseous,
I could favour you with sundry touches
Of the paint-smutches with which the Duchess
Heightened the mellowness of her cheek's yellowness
(To get on faster) until at last her
Cheek grew to be one master-plaster
Of mucus and fucus from mere use of ceruse,
Till in short she grew, from scalp to udder,
Just the object to make you shudder!

XVII

You 're my friend—
What a thing friendship is, world without end!
How it gives the heart and soul a stir-up,
As if somebody broached you a glorious runlet,
And poured out all lovelily, sparkling, and sunlit,
Our green Moldavia, the streaky syrup,
Cotnar as old as the time of the Druids—
Friendship 's as good as that monarch of fluids
To supple a dry brain, fill you its ins-and-outs,—
Gives your Life's hour-glass a shake when the thin sand doubts
Whether to run on or stop short, and guarantees
Age is not all made of stark sloth and arrant ease!
I have seen my little Lady once more,
Jacynth, the Gypsy, Berold, and the rest of it,
For to me spoke the Duke, as I told you before;
I always wanted to make a clean breast of it,

And now it is made—why, my heart's-blood, that went trickle,
Trickle, but anon, in such muddy dribblets,
Is pumped up brisk now, thro' the main ventricle,
And genially floats me about the giblets!
I'll tell you what I intend to do:
I must see this fellow his sad life thro'
—He is our Duke after all,
And I, as he says, but a serf and thrall;
My father was born here and I inherit
His fame, a chain he bound his son with,—
Could I pay in a lump I should prefer it,
But there's no mine to blow up and get done with,
So I must stay till the end of the chapter:
For, as to our middle-age-manners-adapter,
Be it a thing to be glad on or sorry on,
One day or other, his head in a morion,
And breast in a hauberk, his heels he'll kick up,
Slain by some onslaught fierce of hiccup.
And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke rust,
And its leathern sheath lies o'ergrown with a blue crust,

Then, I shall scrape together my earnings;
For, you see, in the Churchyard Jacynth reposes,
And our children all went the way of the roses—
It 's a long lane that knows no turnings—
One needs but little tackle to travel in,
So, just one stout cloak shall I indue,
And for a staff, what beats the javelin
With which his boars my father pinned you?
And then, for a purpose you shall hear presently,
Taking some Cotnar, a tight plump skinful,
I shall go journeying, who but I, pleasantly?
Sorrow is vain and despondency sinful.
What 's a man's age? He must hurry more, that 's all;
Cram in a day, what his youth took a year to hold;
When we mind labour, then only, we 're too old—
What age had Methusalem when he begat Saul?
And at last, as its haven some buffeted ship sees,
(Come all the way from the north-parts with sperm oil)

I shall get safely out of the turmoil
And arrive one day at the land of the Gypsies
And find my Lady, or hear the last news of her
From some old thief and son of Lucifer,
His forehead chapleted green with wreathy hop,
Sunburned all over like an Æthiop:
And when my Cotnar begins to operate,
And the tongue of the rogue to run at a proper rate,
And our wine-skin, tight once, shows each flaccid dent,
I shall drop in with—as if by accident—
"You never knew, then, how it all ended,
What fortunes good or bad attended
The little Lady your Queen befriended?"
—And when that's told me, what's remaining?
This world's too hard for my explaining—
The same wise judge of matters equine
Who still preferred some slim four-year-old
To the big-boned stock of mighty Berold,
And for strong Cotnar drank French weak wine,
He also must be such a Lady's scorner!
Smooth Jacob still robs homely Esau,

Now up, now down, the world's one see-
saw!
—So, I shall find out some snug corner
Under a hedge, like Orson the wood-
knight,
Turn myself round and bid the world
good-night;
And sleep a sound sleep till the trumpet's
blowing
Wakes me (unless priests cheat us lay-
men)
To a world where's to be no further
throwing
Pearls before swine that can't value them.
Amen!

Song from Pippa Passes

The year's at the spring,
The day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in His heaven—
All's right with the world.

The Boy and the Angel

Morning, evening, noon, and night,
"Praise God," sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,
By which the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well;
O'er his work the boy's curls fell:

But ever, at each period,
He stopped and sang, "Praise God".

Then back again his curls he threw,
And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, "Well done;
I doubt not thou art heard, my son,

"As well as if thy voice to-day
Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

"This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
Praises God from Peter's dome."

Said Theocrite, "Would God that I
Might praise Him, that great way, and
die!"

Night passed, day shone,
And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway,
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in Heaven, "Nor day nor night
Now brings the voice of my delight".

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,
Spread his wings and sank to earth;

Entered in flesh the empty cell,
Lived there, and played the craftsman
well:

And morning, evening, noon, and night,
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy to youth he grew:
The man put off the stripling's hue:

The man matured and fell away
Into the season of decay:

And ever o'er the trade he bent,
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will; to him, all one
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, "A praise is in mine ear;
There is no doubt in it, no fear:

"So sing old worlds, and so
New worlds that from my footstool go.

"Clearer loves sound other ways:
I miss my little human praise."

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell
The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'T was Easter Day: he flew to Rome,
And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by
The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,
Stood the new Pope, Theocrite:

And all his past career
Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,
Till on his life the sickness weighed;

And in his cell, when death drew near,
An angel in a dream brought cheer:

And rising from the sickness drear
He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned,
And on his sight the angel burned.

"I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell,
And set thee here; I did not well.

"Vainly I left my angel's-sphere,
Vain was thy dream of many a year.

"Thy voice's praise seemed weak; it dropped—
Creation's chorus stopped!

"Go back and praise again
The early way—while I remain.

"With that weak voice of our disdain,
Take up Creation's pausing strain.

"Back to the cell and poor employ:
Become the craftsman and the boy!'

Theocrite grew old at home;
A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

One vanished as the other died:
They sought God side by side.

Meeting at Night

The grey sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed in the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

Claret and Tokay

My heart sunk with our Claret-flask,
  Just now, beneath the heavy sedges
That serve this pond's black face for mask;
  And still at yonder broken edges
Of the hole, where up the bubbles glisten,
After my heart I look and listen.

Our laughing little flask, compell'd
  Thro' depth to depth more bleak and shady;
As when, both arms beside her held,
  Feet straightened out, some gay French lady
Is caught up from Life's light and motion,
And dropped into Death's silent ocean!

Up jumped Tokay on our table,
Like a pygmy castle-warder,
Dwarfish to see, but stout and able,
Arms and accoutrements all in order;
And fierce he looked north, then, wheeling south,
Blew with his bugle a challenge to Drouth,

Cocked his flap-hat with the tosspot-feather,
Twisted his thumb in his red moustache,
Jingled his huge brass spurs together,
Tightened his waist with its Buda sash,
And then with an impudence nought could abash,
Shrugged his hump-shoulder,
To tell the beholder,
For twenty such knaves he should laugh but the bolder,
And so with his sword-hilt gallantly jutting,
And dexter-hand on his haunch abutting,
Went the little man from Ausbruch, strutting!

Love among the Ruins

Where the quiet-coloured end of evening smiles
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop—

Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

Now—the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one)

Where the domed and daring palace shot
its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor
be prest,
Twelve abreast.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of
grass
Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'er-
spreads
And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone—

Where a multitude of men breathed joy
and woe
Long ago;
Lust of glory pricked their hearts up,
dread of shame
Struck them tame;
And that glory and that shame alike, the
gold
Bought and sold.

Now,—the single little turret that remains
On the plains,
By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
Overscored,
While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
Through the chinks—

Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
Sprang sublime,
And a burning ring all round, the chariots traced
As they raced,
And the monarch and his minions and his dames
Viewed the games.

And I know, while thus the quiet-coloured eve
Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey
Melt away—

That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret, whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
Till I come.

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades,
Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,
All the men!

When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand,
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and north,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—
Gold, of course.

Oh, heart! oh, blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest.
Love is best!

A Lovers' Quarrel

Oh, what a dawn of day!
How the March sun feels like May!
All is blue again
After last night's rain,
And the South dries the hawthorn-spray.
Only, my Love's away!
I 'd as lief that the blue were grey.

Runnels, which rillets swell,
Must be dancing down the dell
With a foamy head
On the beryl bed
Paven smooth as a hermit's cell;
Each with a tale to tell,
Could my Love but attend as well.

Dearest, three months ago!
When we lived blocked-up with snow,—
When the wind would edge
In and in his wedge,
In, as far as the point could go—
Not to our ingle, though,
Where we loved each the other so!

Laughs with so little cause!
We devised games out of straws.
    We would try and trace
    One another's face
In the ash, as an artist draws;
    Free on each other's flaws,
How we chattered like two church daws!

What 's in the "Times"?—a scold
At the emperor deep and cold;
    He has taken a bride
    To his gruesome side,
That 's as fair as himself is bold:
    There they sit ermine-stoled,
And she powders her hair with gold.

Fancy the Pampas' sheen!
Miles and miles of gold and green
    Where the sun-flowers blow
    In a solid glow,
And to break now and then the screen—
    Black neck and eyeballs keen,
Up a wild horse leaps between!

Try, will our table turn?
Lay your hands there light, and yearn
    Till the yearning slips
    Thro' the finger tips
In a fire which a few discern,
    And a very few feel burn,
And the rest, they may live and learn!

Then we would up and pace,
For a change, about the place,
Each with arm o'er neck.
'T is our quarter-deck,
We are seamen in woeful case.
Help in the ocean-space!
Or, if no help, we 'll embrace.

See, how she looks now, drest
In a sledging-cap and vest.
'T is a huge fur cloak—
Like a reindeer's yoke
Falls the lappet along the breast:
Sleeves for her arms to rest,
Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

Teach me to flirt a fan
As the Spanish ladies can,
Or I tint your lip
With a burnt stick's tip
And you turn into such a man!
Just the two spots that span
Half the bill of the young male swan.

Dearest, three months ago
When the mesmeriser Snow
With his hand's first sweep
Put the earth to sleep,
'T was a time when the heart could show
All—how was earth to know,
'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro!

Dearest, three months ago
When we loved each other so,
Lived and loved the same
Till an evening came
When a shaft from the Devil's bow
Pierced to our ingle-glow,
And the friends were friend and foe!

Not from the heart beneath—
'T was a bubble born of breath,
Neither sneer nor vaunt,
Nor reproach nor taunt.
See a word, how it severeth!
Oh, power of life and death
In the tongue, as the Preacher saith!

Woman, and will you cast
For a word, quite off at last,
Me, your own, your you,—
Since, as Truth is true,
I was you all the happy past—
Me do you leave aghast
With the memories we amassed?

Love, if you knew the light
That your soul casts in my sight,
How I look to you
For the pure and true,
And the beauteous and the right,—
Bear with a moment's spite
When a mere mote threats the white!

What of a hasty word?
Is the fleshly heart not stirred
By a worm's pin-prick
Where its roots are quick?
See the eye, by a fly's-foot blurred—
Ear, when a straw is heard
Scratch the brain's coat of curd!

Foul be the world or fair,
More or less, how can I care?
'T is the world the same
For my praise or blame,
And endurance is easy there.
Wrong in the one thing rare—
Oh, it is hard to bear!

Here 's the spring back or close,
When the almond-blossom blows;
We shall have the word
In that minor third
There is none but the cuckoo knows—
Heaps of the guelder-rose!
I must bear with it, I suppose.

Could but November come,
Were the noisy birds struck dumb
At the warning slash
Of his driver's-lash—
I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
Facing the castle glum
And the giant's fee-faw-fum!

Then, were the world well stript
Of the gear wherein equipped
We can stand apart,
Heart dispense with heart
In the sun, with the flowers unnipped,—
Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
We were both in a bare-walled crypt

Each in the crypt would cry
"But one freezes here! and why?
When a heart as chill
At my own would thrill
Back to life, and its fires out-fly?
Heart, shall we live or die?
The rest, . . . settle it by and by!"

So, she 'd efface the score,
And forgive me as before.
Just at twelve o'clock
I shall hear her knock
In the worst of a storm's uproar—
I shall pull her through the door—
I shall have her for evermore!

Evelyn Hope

Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead!
  Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her book-shelf, this her bed;
  She plucked that piece of geranium-
    flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass.
  Little has yet been changed, I think—
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
  Save two long rays thro' the hinge's
    chink.

Sixteen years old when she died!
  Perhaps she had scarcely heard my
    name—
It was not her time to love: beside,
  Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
  And now was quiet, now astir—
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,
  And the sweet white brow is all of her.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?
  What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
  Made you of spirit, fire and dew—

And just because I was thrice as old,
And our paths in the world diverged so wide
Each was nought to each, must I be told?
We were fellow mortals, nought beside?

No, indeed! for God above
Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love,—
I claim you still, for my own love's sake!
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few—
Much is to learn and much to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.

But the time will come,—at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant, I shall say,
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red—
And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's stead.

I have lived, I shall say, so much since then,
Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;
Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me—
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!
What is the issue? let us see!

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while;
My heart seemed full as it could hold—
There was place and to spare for the frank young smile
And the red young mouth and the hair's young gold.
So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep—
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand.
There, that is our secret! go to sleep;
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

A Woman's Last Word

Let 's contend no more, Love,
Strive nor weep—
All be as before, Love,
—Only sleep!

What so wild as words are?
—I and thou
In debate, as birds are,
Hawk on bough!

See the creature stalking
While we speak—
Hush and hide the talking,
Cheek on cheek!

What so false as truth is,
False to thee?
Where the serpent's tooth is,
Shun the tree—

Where the apple reddens
Never pry—
Lest we lose our Edens,
Eve and I!

Be a god and hold me
With a charm—
Be a man and fold me
With thine arm!

Teach me, only teach, Love!
As I ought
I will speak thy speech, Love,
Think thy thought—

Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands!

That shall be to-morrow
Not to-night:
I must bury sorrow
Out of sight.

—Must a little weep, Love,
—Foolish me!
And so fall asleep, Love,
Loved by thee.

A Toccata of Galuppi's

Oh, Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad
to find!
I can hardly misconceive you; it would
prove me deaf and blind;
But although I give you credit, 't is with
such a heavy mind!

Here you come with your old music, and
here's all the good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice,
where the merchants were the kings,
Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges
used to wed the sea with rings?

Ay, because the sea 's the street there;
and 't is arched by . . . what you call
. . . Shylock's bridge with houses on it,
where they kept the carnival!
I was never out of England—it 's as if I
saw it all!

Did young people take their pleasure
when the sea was warm in May?
Balls and masks begun at midnight, burning ever to mid-day,
When they made up fresh adventures for
the morrow, do you say?

Was a lady such a lady, cheeks so round
and lips so red,—
On her neck the small face buoyant, like
a bell-flower on its bed,
O'er the breast's superb abundance where
a man might base his head?

Well (and it was graceful of them) they'd
break talk off and afford
—She, to bite her mask's black velvet, he
to finger on his sword,
While you sat and played Toccatas, stately
at the clavichord?

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive,
sixths diminished sigh on sigh,
Told them something? Those suspensions,
those solutions—"Must we die?"
Those commiserating sevenths—"Life
might last! we can but try!"

"Were you happy?"—"Yes."—"And are you still as happy?"—"Yes—and you?"
—"Then more kisses"—"Did *I* stop them, when a million seemed so few?"
Hark—the dominant's persistence, till it must be answered to!

So an octave struck the answer. Oh, they praised you, I dare say!
"Brave Galuppi! that was music! good alike at grave and gay!
I can always leave off talking, when I hear a master play."

Then they left you for their pleasure: till in due time, one by one,
Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well undone,
Death came tacitly and took them where they never see the sun.

But when I sit down to reason,—think to take my stand nor swerve
Till I triumph o'er a secret wrung from nature's close reserve,
In you come with your cold music, till I creep thro' every nerve.

Yes, you, like a ghostly cricket, creaking
where a house was burned—
"Dust and ashes, dead and done with,
Venice spent what Venice earned!
The soul, doubtless, is immortal—where a
soul can be discerned.

"Yours for instance, you know physics,
something of geology,
Mathematics are your pastime; souls shall
rise in their degree;
Butterflies may dread extinction,—you 'll
not die, it cannot be!

"As for Venice and its people, merely
born to bloom and drop,
Here on earth they bore their fruitage,
mirth and folly were the crop.
What of soul was left, I wonder, when
the kissing had to stop?

"Dust and ashes!" So you creak it, and
I want the heart to scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too—
what 's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms?
I feel chilly and grown old.

By the Fire-side

How well I know what I mean to do
When the long dark Autumn evenings come,
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
With the music of all thy voices, dumb
In life's November too!

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows,
And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
Not verse now, only prose!

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
"There he is at it, deep in Greek—
Now or never, then, out we slip
To cut from the hazels by the creek
A mainmast for our ship".

I shall be at it indeed, my friends!
  Greek puts already on either side
Such a branch-work forth, as soon extends
  To a vista opening far and wide,
And I pass out where it ends.

The outside-frame like your hazel-trees—
  But the inside-archway narrows fast,
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
  And we slope to Italy at last
And youth, by green degrees.

I follow wherever I am led,
  Knowing so well the leader's hand—
Oh, woman-country, wooed, not wed,
  Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
Laid to their hearts instead!

Look at the ruined chapel again
  Half way up in the Alpine gorge.
Is that a tower, I point you plain,
  Or is it a mill or an iron forge
Breaks solitude in vain?

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things;
  The woods are round us, heaped and dim;

From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
  The thread of water single and slim,
Thro' the ravage some torrent brings!

Does it feed the little lake below?
  That speck of white just on its marge
Is Pella: see, in the evening glow
  How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
When Alp meets Heaven in snow.

On our other side is the straight-up rock;
  And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
By boulder-stones where lichens mock
  The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
Their teeth to the polished block.

Oh, the sense of the yellow mountain flowers,
  And the thorny balls, each three in one,
The chestnuts throw on our path in showers,
  For the drop of the woodland fruit 's begun
These early November hours,

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
  Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
O'er a shield, else gold from rim to boss,
  And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
Elf-needled mat of moss,

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
  Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged
  Where a freaked, fawn-coloured, flaky crew
Of toad-stools peep indulged.

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
  That takes the turn to a range beyond,
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge
  Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond
Danced over by the midge.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
  Blackish grey and mostly wet;
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
  See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike!

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
  On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
  Gathered within that precinct small
By the dozen ways one roams—

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
  Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,
  Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

It has some pretension too, this front,
  With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
Set over the porch, art's early wont—
  'T is John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt—

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
  For a pent-house properly projects
Where three carved beams make a certain show,
  Dating — good thought of our architect's—
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

And all day long a bird sings there,
  And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times:
The place is silent and aware;
  It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
But that is its own affair.

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
  Oh, heart my own, oh, eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
  With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path grey heads abhor?

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them;
  Youth, flowery all the way, there stops—
Not they; age threatens and they contemn,
  Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
One inch from our life's safe hem!

With me, youth led—I will speak now,
  No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by fire-light, that great brow
  And the spirit-small hand propping it
Mutely—my heart knows how—

When, if I think but deep enough,
  You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme;
And you, too, find without a rebuff
  The response your soul seeks many a time
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff—

My own, confirm me! If I tread
  This path back, is it not in pride
To think how little I dreamed it led
  To an age so blest that by its side
Youth seems the waste instead!

My own, see where the years conduct!
  At first, 't was something our two souls
Should mix as mists do: each is sucked
  Into each now; on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

Think, when our one soul understands
  The great Word which makes all things new—
When earth breaks up and Heaven expands—
  How will the change strike me and you
In the House not made with hands?

Oh, I must feel your brain prompt mine,
  Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
  See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the Divine!

But who could have expected this,
  When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
  To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss?

Come back with me to the first of all,
  Let us lean and love it over again—
Let us now forget and then recall,
  Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
And gather what we let fall!

What did I say?—that a small bird sings
  All day long, save when a brown pair
Of hawks from the wood float with wide
    wings
  Strained to a bell: 'gainst the noon-day
    glare
You count the streaks and rings.

But at afternoon or almost eve
  'T is better; then the silence grows
To that degree, you half believe
  It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave.

Hither we walked, then, side by side,
  Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
And still I questioned or replied
  While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
Lay choking in its pride.

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
  And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
And care about the fresco's loss,
  And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss.

Stoop and kneel on the settle under—
  Look through the window's grated square:
Nothing to see! for fear of plunder,
  The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder.

We stoop and look in through the grate,
  See the little porch and rustic door,
Read duly the dead builder's date,
  Then cross the bridge we crossed before,
Take the path again—but wait!

Oh moment, one and infinite!
  The water slips o'er stock and stone;
The west is tender, hardly bright.
  How grey at once is the evening grown—
One star, the chrysolite!

We two stood there with never a third,
  But each by each, as each knew well.
The sights we saw and the sounds we heard,
  The lights and the shades made up a spell
Till the trouble grew and stirred.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
  And the little less, and what worlds away!

How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this!

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her.
I could fix her face with a guard between,
And find her soul as when friends confer,
Friends—lovers that might have been.

For my heart had a touch of the wood-
land time,
Wanting to sleep now over its best.
Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
But bring to the last leaf no such test.
"Hold the last fast!" says the rhyme.

For a chance to make your little much,
To gain a lover and lose a friend,
Venture the tree and a myriad such,
When nothing you mar but the year
can mend!
But a last leaf—fear to touch.

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
Eddying down till it find your face
At some slight wind—(best chance of all!)
Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-
place
You trembled to forestall!

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,
—That hair so dark and dear, how worth
That a man should strive and agonise,
And taste a very hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize!

Oh, you might have turned and tried a man,
Set him a space to weary and wear,
And prove which suited more your plan,
His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,
And filled my empty heart at a word.
If you join two lives, there is oft a scar,
They are one and one, with a shadowy third;
One near one is too far.

A moment after, and hands unseen
Were hanging the night around us fast.
But we knew that a bar was broken between
Life and life; we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.

The forests had done it; there they stood;
We caught for a second the powers at play:

They had mingled us so, for once and for
good,
Their work was done—we might go or
stay,
They relapsed to their ancient mood.

How the world is made for each of us!
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself—to wit,
By its fruit, the thing it does!

Be Hate that fruit or Love that fruit,
It forwards the general deed of man:
And each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan;
Each living his own, to boot.

I am named and known by that hour's feat;
There took my station and degree.
So grew my own small life complete
As nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet!

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now
Back again, as you mutely sit
Musing by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Yonder, my heart knows how!

So the earth has gained by one man more,
And the gain of earth must be Heaven's gain too;
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
When the autumn comes: which I mean to do
One day, as I said before.

A Serenade at the Villa

That was I, you heard last night
When there rose no moon at all,
Nor, to pierce the strained and tight
Tent of heaven, a planet small:
Life was dead, and so was light.

Not a twinkle from the fly,
Not a glimmer from the worm.
When the crickets stopped their cry,
When the owls forbore a term,
You heard music; that was I.

Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
Sultrily suspired for proof:
In at heaven and out again,
Lightning!—where it broke the roof,
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain.

What they could my words expressed,
O my love, my all, my one!
Singing helped the verses best,
And when singing's best was done,
To my lute I left the rest.

So wore night; the east was grey,
White the broad-faced hemlock flowers;
Soon would come another day;
Ere its first of heavy hours
Found me, I had past away.

What became of all the hopes,
Words and song and lute as well?
Say, this struck you: "When life gropes
Feebly for the path where fell
Light last on the evening slopes,—

"One friend in that path shall be,
To secure my step from wrong;
One to count night day for me,
Patient through the watches long,
Serving most with none to see."

Never say—as something bodes—
"So, the worst has yet a worse!
When life halts 'neath double loads,
Better the task-master's curse
Than such music on the roads!

"When no moon succeeds the sun,
Nor can pierce the midnight's tent
Any star, the smallest one,
While some drops, where lightning rent,
Show the final storm begun—

"When the fire-fly hides its spot,
  When the garden-voices fail
In the darkness thick and hot,—
  Shall another voice avail,
That shape be where those are not?

"Has some plague a longer lease,
  Proffering its help uncouth?
Can't one even die in peace?
  As one shuts one's eyes on youth,
Is that face the last one sees?"

Oh, how dark your villa was,
  Windows fast and obdurate!
How the garden grudged me grass
  Where I stood—the iron gate
Ground its teeth to let me pass!

My Star

All that I know
Of a certain star,
Is, it can throw
(Like the angled spar)
Now a dart of red,
Now a dart of blue,
Till my friends have said
They would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue!
Then it stops like a bird,—like a flower, hangs furled;
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world?
Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

Love in a Life

Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her,
Next time, herself!—not the trouble behind her
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew,—
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door;
I try the fresh fortune—
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.
Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares?
But 't is twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore.
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

Escape me?
Never—
Beloved!
While I am I, and you are you,
So long as the world contains us both,
Me the loving and you the loth,
While the one eludes, must the other pursue.
My life is a fault at last, I fear—
It seems too much like a fate, indeed!
Though I do my best I shall scarce succeed—
But what if I fail of my purpose here?

It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And baffled, get up to begin again,—
So the chace takes up one's life, that's all.
While, look but once from your farthest bound,
At me so deep in the dust and dark,
No sooner the old hope drops to ground
Than a new one, straight to the self-same mark,
I shape me—
Ever
Removed!

The Last Ride Together

I said—Then, dearest, since 't is so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all my life seemed meant for, fails,
  Since this was written and needs must be—
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not blame,—
  Your leave for one more last ride with me.

My mistress bent that brow of hers,
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me a breathing-while or two
  With life or death in the balance—
    Right!
The blood replenished me again:
My last thought was at least not vain.

I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride;
So one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end to-night?

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions—sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once—
And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear!
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated,—who can tell?
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive and who succeeds?
We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
As the world rushed by on either side.
I thought, All labour, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty Done, the Undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
I hoped she would love me. Here we ride.

What hand and brain went ever paired?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.
There 's many a crown for who can reach.
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm—you tell

What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'T is something, nay 't is much—but then,
Have you yourself what 's best for men?
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
Sing, riding 's a joy! For me, I ride.

And you, great sculptor—so you gave
A score of years to art, her slave,
And that 's your Venus—whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
You acquiesce and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you, grown grey
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
"Greatly his opera's strains intend,
But in music we know how fashions end!"
I gave my youth—but we ride, in fine.

Who knows what 's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being; had I signed the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
—Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.

This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest—
Earth being so good, would Heaven seem
best?
Now, Heaven and she are beyond this
ride.

And yet—she has not spoke so long!
What if Heaven be, that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,
We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two,
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,—
And Heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha

Hist, but a word, fair and soft!
  Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!
Answer the question I 've put you so oft—
  What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?
See, we 're alone in the loft.

I, the poor organist here,
  Hugues, the composer of note—
Dead, though, and done with, this many a year—
  Let 's have a colloquy, something to quote,
Make the world prick up its ear!

See, the church empties a-pace.
  Fast they extinguish the lights—
Hallo, there, sacristan! five minutes' grace!
  Here 's a crank pedal wants setting to rights,
Baulks one of holding the base.

See, our huge house of the sounds
  Hushing its hundreds at once,
Bids the last loiterer back to his bounds
  —Oh, you may challenge them, not a response
Get the church saints on their rounds!

(Saints go their rounds, who shall doubt?
  —March, with the moon to admire,
Up nave, down chancel, turn transept about,
  Supervise all betwixt pavement and spire,
Put rats and mice to the rout—

Aloys and Jurien and Just—
  Order things back to their place,
Have a sharp eye lest the candlesticks rust,
  Rub the church plate, darn the sacrament lace,
Clear the desk velvet of dust.)

Here 's your book, younger folks shelve!
  Played I not off-hand and runningly,
Just now, your masterpiece, hard number twelve?
  Here 's what should strike,—could one handle it cunningly:
Help the axe, give it a helve!

Page after page as I played,
  Every bar's rest where one wipes
Sweat from one's brow, I looked up and surveyed
  O'er my three claviers, yon forest of pipes
Whence you still peeped in the shade.

Sure you were wishful to speak,
  You, with brow ruled like a score,
Yes, and eyes buried in pits on each cheek,
  Like two great breves as they wrote them of yore
Each side that bar, your straight beak!

Sure you said—"Good, the mere notes!
  Still, couldst thou take my intent,
Know what procured me our Company's votes—
  Masters being lauded and sciolists shent,
Parted the sheep from the goats!"

Well then, speak up, never flinch!
  Quick, ere my candle's a snuff
—Burnt, do you see? to its uttermost inch—
  I believe in you, but that's not enough.
Give my conviction a clinch!

First you deliver your phrase
—Nothing propound, that I see,
Fit in itself for much blame or much praise—
Answered no less, where no answer needs be:
Off start the Two on their ways!

Straight must a Third interpose,
Volunteer needlessly help—
In strikes a Fourth, a Fifth thrusts in his nose,
So the cry 's open, the kennel 's a-yelp,
Argument 's hot to the close!

One dissertates, he is candid—
Two must discept,—has distinguished!
Three helps the couple, if ever yet man did:
Four protests, Five makes a dart at the thing wished—
Back to One, goes the case bandied!

One says his say with a difference—
More of expounding, explaining!
All now is wrangle, abuse, and vociferance—
Now there 's a truce, all 's subdued, self-restraining—
Five, though, stands out all the stiffer hence.

One is incisive, corrosive—
Two retorts, nettled, curt, crepitant—
Three makes rejoinder, expansive, explosive—
Four overbears them all, strident and strepitant—
Five . . . O Danaides, O Sieve!

Now, they ply axes and crowbars—
Now, they prick pins at a tissue
Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
Worked on the bone of a lie. To what issue?
Where is our gain at the Two-bars?

Est fuga, volvitur rota!
On we drift. Where looms the dim port?
One, Two, Three, Four, Five, contribute their quota—
Something is gained, if one caught but the import—
Show it us—Hugues of Saxe-Gotha!

What with affirming, denying,
Holding, risposting, subjoining,
All's like . . . it's like . . . for an instance I'm trying . . .
There! See our roof, its gilt moulding and groining
Under those spider-webs lying!

So your fugue broadens and thickens,
Greatens and deepens and lengthens,
Till one exclaims—"But where's music, the dickens?
Blot ye the gold, while your spider-web strengthens
Blacked to the stoutest of tickens?"

I for man's effort am zealous.
Prove me such censure's unfounded!
Seems it surprising a lover grows jealous—
Hopes 't was for something his organ-pipes sounded,
Tiring three boys at the bellows?

Is it your moral of Life?
Such a web, simple and subtle,
Weave we on earth here in impotent strife,
Backward and forward each throwing his shuttle,
Death ending all with a knife?

Over our heads Truth and Nature—
Still our life's zigzags and dodges,
Ins and outs weaving a new legislature—
God's gold just shining its last where that lodges,
Palled beneath Man's usurpature!

So we o'ershroud stars and roses,
  Cherub and trophy and garland.
Nothings grow something which quietly closes
  Heaven's earnest eye,—not a glimpse of the far land
Gets through our comments and glozes.

Ah, but traditions, inventions,
  (Say we and make up a visage)
So many men with such various intentions
  Down the past ages must know more than this age!
Leave the web all its dimensions!

Who thinks Hugues wrote for the deaf,
  Proved a mere mountain in labour?
Better submit—try again—what 's the clef?
  'Faith, it 's no trifle for pipe and for tabor—
Four flats—the minor in F.

Friend, your fugue taxes the finger.
  Learning it once, who would lose it?
Yet all the while a misgiving will linger—
  Truth 's golden o'er us although we refuse it—
Nature, thro' dust-clouds we fling her!

Hugues! I advise *meâ pœnâ*
(Counterpoint glares like a Gorgon)
Bid One, Two, Three, Four, Five, clear the arena!
Say the word, straight I unstop the full-organ,
Blare out the *mode Palestrina*.

While in the roof, if I 'm right there—
. . . Lo, you, the wick in the socket!
Hallo, you sacristan, show us a light there!
Down it dips, gone like a rocket!
What, you want, do you, to come unawares,
Sweeping the church up for first morning-prayers,
And find a poor devil at end of his cares
At the foot of your rotten-planked rat-riddled stairs?
Do I carry the moon in my pocket?

Memorabilia

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you?
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems, and new!

But you were living before that,
And you are living after,
And the memory I started at—
My starting moves your laughter.

I crossed a moor with a name of its own
And a use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about—

For there I picked up on the heather
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather—
Well, I forget the rest.

Andrea Del Sarto

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER".)

But do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine — will it? tenderly.
Oh, I'll content him, — but to-morrow, Love!
I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if — forgive now — should you let me sit

Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly, the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
To-morrow how you shall be glad for this!
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
Don't count the time lost, either; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require—
It saves a model. So! keep looking so—
My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds!
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less!
You smile? why, there 's my picture ready made.
There 's what we painters call our harmony!
A common greyness silvers everything,—

All in a twilight, you and I alike
—You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone, you know), but I, at every point;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead!
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are:
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!
This chamber for example — turn your head—
All that's behind us! you don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak;

And that cartoon, the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love! so such things should be.
Behold Madonna, I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say perfectly
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week;
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 't is easy, all of it,
No sketches first, no studies, that 's long past—
I do what many dream of all their lives
—Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive — you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat—
Yet do much less, so much less, some one says,
(I know his name, no matter) so much less!

Well, less is more, Lucrezia! I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men! at a word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken—what of that? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered—what of that?

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his
grasp,
Or what's a Heaven for? all is silver-grey
Placid and perfect with my art—the worse!
I know both what I want and what might
gain—
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
"Had I been two, another and myself,
Our head would have o'erlooked the
world!" No doubt.
Yonder's a work, now, of that famous
youth
The Urbinate who died five years ago.
('T is copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes
to see,
Reaching, that Heaven might so replenish
him,
Above and through his art—for it gives
way;
That arm is wrongly put — and there
again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak! its soul is right,
He means right—that, a child may under-
stand.
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it.
But all the play, the insight and the
stretch—

Out of me! out of me! And wherefore
out?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me
soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you.
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I
think—
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh, with the same perfect
brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect
mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the
snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought
a mind!
Some women do so. Had the mouth
there urged
"God and the glory! never care for gain.
The present by the future, what is that?
Live for fame, side by side with Angelo—
Rafael is waiting. Up to God all three!"
I might have done it for you. So it
seems—
Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
Beside, incentives come from the soul's
self;
The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
What wife had Rafael, or has Angelo?

In this world, who can do a thing, will
not—
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
Yet the will 's somewhat—somewhat, too,
the power—
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
'T is safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while, despised, to speak
the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all
day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside;
But they speak sometimes; I must bear
it all.
Well may they speak! That Francis, that
first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!
I surely then could sometimes leave the
ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden
look,—
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made
the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my
neck,

The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
This in the background, waiting on my work,
To crown the issue with a last reward!
A good time, was it not, my kingly days?
And had you not grown restless—but I know—
'T is done and past; 't was right, my instinct said;
Too live the life grew, golden and not grey—
And I 'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.
How could it end in any other way?
You called me, and I came home to your heart.
The triumph was to have ended there—then if
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?

Let my hands frame your face in your
hair's gold,
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!
"Rafael did this, Andrea painted that—
The Roman's is the better when you
pray,
But still the other's Virgin was his wife—"
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
Both pictures in your presence; clearer
grows
My better fortune, I resolve to think.
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
Said one day Angelo, his very self,
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these
years . . .
(When the young man was flaming out
his thoughts
Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
Too lifted up in heart because of it)
"Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
Goes up and down our Florence, none
cares how,
Who, were he set to plan and execute
As you are pricked on by your popes and
kings,
Would bring the sweat into that brow of
yours!"
To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is
wrong.
I hardly dare—yet, only you to see,

Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!
Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he? why, who but Michael Angelo?
Do you forget already words like those?)
If really there was such a chance, so lost,
Is, whether you're — not grateful — but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
Morello's gone, the watch-lights shew the wall.
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, Love,—come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me. Oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,

The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with!
Let us but love each other. Must you go?
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans!
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The grey remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,
Not yours this time! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michael Angelo—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,

Finish the portrait out of hand — there,
there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove
enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak.
Beside,
What 's better and what 's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff.
Love, does that please you? Ah, but
what does he,
The Cousin! what does he to please you
more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis! it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all
is said.
My father and my mother died of want.
Well, had I riches of my own? you see
How one gets rich! Let each one bear
his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor
they died:
And I have laboured somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good
son

Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Angelo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine! So—still they overcome
Because there 's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

In a Year

Never any more
  While I live,
Need I hope to see his face
  As before.
Once his love grown chill,
  Mine may strive—
Bitterly we re-embrace,
  Single still.

Was it something said,
  Something done,
Vexed him? was it touch of hand,
  Turn of head?
Strange! that very way
  Love begun.
I as little understand
  Love's decay.

When I sewed or drew,
  I recall
How he looked as if I sang,
  —Sweetly too.
If I spoke a word,
  First of all
Up his cheek the colour sprang,
  Then he heard.

Sitting by my side,
  At my feet,
So he breathed the air I breathed,
  Satisfied!
I, too, at love's brim
  Touched the sweet:
I would die if death bequeathed
  Sweet to him.

"Speak, I love thee best!"
  He exclaimed.
"Let thy love my own foretell,—"
  I confessed:
"Clasp my heart on thine
  Now unblamed,
Since upon thy soul as well
  Hangeth mine!"

Was it wrong to own,
  Being truth?
Why should all the giving prove
  His alone?
I had wealth and ease,
  Beauty, youth—
Since my lover gave me love
  I gave these.

That was all I meant,
  —To be just,
And the passion I had raised
  To content.

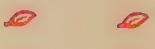
Since he chose to change
  Gold for dust,
If I gave him what he praised
  Was it strange?

Would he loved me yet,
  On and on,
While I found some way undreamed
  —Paid my debt!
Gave more life and more,
  Till, all gone,
He should smile, "She never seemed
  Mine before.

"What—she felt the while,
  Must I think?
Love's so different with us men,"
  He should smile.
"Dying for my sake—
  White and pink!
Can't we touch these bubbles then
  But they break?"

Dear, the pang is brief.
  Do thy part,
Have thy pleasure. How perplext
  Grows belief!
Well, this cold clay clod
  Was man's heart.
Crumble it—and what comes next?
  Is it God?

Old Pictures in Florence



The morn when first it thunders in March,
The eel in the pond gives a leap, they say.
As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch
Of the villa-gate, this warm March day,
No flash snapt, no dumb thunder rolled
In the valley beneath, where, white and wide,
Washed by the morning's water-gold,
Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

River and bridge and street and square
Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,
Through the live translucent bath of air,
As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
And of all I saw and of all I praised,
The most to praise and the best to see,
Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised:
But why did it more than startle me?

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
  Could you play me false who loved you so?
Some slights if a certain heart endures
  It feels, I would have your fellows know!
'Faith—I perceive not why I should care
  To break a silence that suits them best,
But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear
  When I find a Giotto join the rest.

On the arch where olives overhead
  Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,
(That sharp-curled leaf they never shed)
  'Twixt the aloes I used to lean in chief,
And mark through the winter afternoons,
  By a gift God grants me now and then,
In the mild decline of those suns like moons,
  Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go
  For pleasure or profit, her men alive—
My business was hardly with them, I trow,
  But with empty cells of the human hive;

—With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,
The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch—
Its face, set full for the sun to shave.

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
Wherever an outline weakens and wanes
Till the latest life in the painting stops,
Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick pains!
One, wishful each scrap should clutch its brick,
Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
—A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
The wronged great soul of an ancient Master.

For oh, this world and the wrong it does!
They are safe in heaven with their backs to it,
The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz
Round the works of, you of the little wit!
Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope
Now that they see God face to face,
And have all attained to be poets, I hope?
'T is their holiday now, in any case.

Much they reck of your praise and you!
But the wronged great souls—can they be quit
Of a world where all their work is to do,
Where you style them, you of the little wit,
Old Master this and Early the other,
Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows,
That a younger succeeds to an elder brother,
Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

And here where your praise would yield returns
And a handsome word or two give help,
Here, after your kind, the mastiff girns
And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
What, not a word for Stefano there
—Of brow once prominent and starry,
Called Nature's ape and the world's despair
For his peerless painting (see Vasari)?

There he stands now. Study, my friends,
What a man's work comes to! so he plans it,
Performs it, perfects it, makes amends
For the toiling and moiling, and there 's its transit!

Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,
With upturned eye while the hand is busy,
Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbour!
'T is looking downward makes one dizzy.

If you knew their work you would deal your dole.
May I take upon me to instruct you?
When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,
Thus much had the world to boast *in fructu*—
The truth of Man, as by God first spoken,
Which the actual generations garble,
Was re-uttered,—and Soul (which Limbs betoken)
And Limbs (Soul informs) were made new in marble.

So you saw yourself as you wished you were,
As you might have been, as you cannot be;
And bringing your own shortcomings there,
You grew content in your poor degree

With your little power, by those statues' godhead,
And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,
And your little grace, by their grace embodied,
And your little date, by their forms that stay.

You would fain be kinglier, say, than I am?
Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.
You 'd fain be a model? the Son of Priam
Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees' use.
You 're wroth — can you slay your snake like Apollo?
You 're grieved — still Niobe's the grander!
You live — there 's the Racers' frieze to follow —
You die — there 's the dying Alexander.

So, testing your weakness by their strength,
Your meagre charms by their rounded beauty,
Measured by Art in your breadth and length,
You learn — to submit is the worsted's duty.

—When I say "you" 'tis the common soul,
The collective, I mean—the race of Man
That receives life in parts to live in a whole,
And grow here according to God's own plan.

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,
You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day
And cried with a start—What if we so small
Are greater, ay, greater the while than they!
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?
In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature;
For time, theirs—ours, for eternity.

To-day's brief passion limits their range,
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
They are perfect—how else? they shall never change:
We are faulty—why not? we have time in store.

The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us — we are rough-hewn, no-wise polished:
They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

'T is a lifelong toil till our lump be leaven—
The better! what 's come to perfection perishes.
Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven.
Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.
Thyself shall afford the example, Giotto!
Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?) "O!"
Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

Is it true, we are now, and shall be hereafter,
But what—is depending on life's one minute?
Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
Our first step out of the gulf or in it?
And Man, this step within his endeavour,
His face, have no more play and action

Than joy which is crystallized for ever,
Or grief, an eternal petrifaction!

On which I conclude, that the early painters,
To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish you?"—
Replied "Become now self-acquainters,
And paint man, man,—whatever the issue!
Make the hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
New fears aggrandise the rags and tatters.
So bring the invisible full into play,
Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters?"

Give these, I say, full honour and glory
For daring so much, before they well did it.
The first of the new, in our race's story,
Beats the last of the old, 'tis no idle quiddit.
The worthies began a revolution
Which if on the earth we intend to acknowledge
Honour them now—(ends my allocution)
Nor confer your degree when the folks leave college.

There 's a fancy some lean to and others hate—
That, when this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins—
Where the strong and the weak, this world's congeries,
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series;
Only the scale 's to be changed, that 's all.

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best,
And through earth and its noise, what is heaven's serene,—
When its faith in the same has stood the test—
Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labour are surely done.
There remaineth a rest for the people of God,
And I have had troubles enough for one.

But at any rate I have loved the season
Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy,
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan;
My painter—who but Cimabue?
Nor ever was man of them all indeed,
From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,
Could say that he missed my critic-meed.
So now to my special grievance—heigh-ho!

Their ghosts now stand, as I said before,
Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,
Blocked up, knocked out, or whitewashed o'er
—No getting again what the church has grasped!
The works on the wall must take their chance,
"Works never conceded to England's thick clime!"
(I hope they prefer their inheritance
Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

When they go at length, with such a shaking
Of heads o'er the old delusions, sadly
Each master his way through the black streets taking,
Where many a lost work breathes though badly—

Why don't they bethink them of who has merited?
Why not reveal, while their pictures dree
Such doom, that a captive's to be outferreted?
Why do they never remember me?

Not that I expect the great Bigordi
Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose;
Nor wronged Lippino—and not a word I
Say of a scrap of Fra Angelico's.
But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,
To grant me a taste of your intonaco—
Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a sad eye?
No churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco?

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,
My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,
Save me a sample, give me the hap
Of a muscular Christ that shows the draughtsman?
No Virgin by him, the somewhat petty,
Of finical touch and tempera crumbly—
Could not Alesso Baldovinetti
Contribute so much, I ask him humbly?

Margheritone of Arezzo,
With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling barret,
(Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
You bald, saturnine, poll-clawed parrot?)
No poor glimmering Crucifixion,
Where in the foreground kneels the donor?
If such remain, as is my conviction,
The hoarding does you but little honour.

They pass: for them the panels may thrill,
The tempera grow alive and tinglish—
Rot or are left to the mercies still
Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the English!
Seeing mere money's worth in their prize,
Who sell it to some one calm as Zeno
At naked Art, and in ecstasies
Before some clay-cold, vile Carlino!

No matter for these! But Giotto, you,
Have you allowed, as the town-tongues babble it—
Never! it shall not be counted true—
That a certain precious little tablet
Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover,—
Buried so long in oblivion's womb,

And, left for another than I to discover,—
Turns up at last! and to whom?—to whom?

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
(Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)
Stood on the altar-steps, patient and weary too!
Nay, I shall have it yet, *detur amanti!*
My Koh-i-noor—or (if that 's a platitude)
Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye!
So, in anticipative gratitude,
What if I take up my hope and prophesy?

When the hour is ripe, and a certain dotard
Is pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,
To the worse side of the Mont St. Gothard,
We shall begin by way of rejoicing;
None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge),
No civic guards, all plumes and lacquer,
Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
Over Morello with squib and cracker.

We 'll shoot this time better game and bag 'em hot—
No display at the stone of Dante,

But a kind of Witan-agemot
("Casa Guidi", *quod videas ante*)
To ponder Freedom restored to Florence,
How Art may return that departed with her.
Go, hated house, go each trace of the Loraine's,
And bring us the days of Orgagna hither!

How we shall prologuise, how we shall perorate,
Say fit things upon art and history—
Set truth at blood-heat and the false at a zero rate,
Make of the want of the age no mystery!
Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
Show, monarchy its uncouth cub licks
Out of the bear's shape to the chimæra's—
Pure Art's birth being still the republic's!

Then one shall propose (in a speech, curt Tuscan,
Sober, expurgate, spare of an "*issimo*",)
Ending our half-told tale of Cambuscan,
Turning the Bell-tower's *alt* to *altissimo*.
And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia
The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
Soars up in gold its full fifty braccia,
Completing Florence, as Florence, Italy.

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
Is broken away, and the long-pent fire
Like the golden hope of the world, unbaffled
Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire—
As, "God and the People" plain for its motto,
Thence the new tricolor flaps at the sky?
Foreseeing the day that vindicates Giotto
And Florence together, the first am I!

Saul

I

Said Abner, "At last thou art come!
Ere I tell, ere thou speak,
Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I
wished it, and did kiss his cheek.
And he, "Since the King, O my friend,
for thy countenance sent,
Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor
until from his tent
Thou return with the joyful assurance the
King liveth yet,
Shall our lip with the honey be bright,
with the water be wet.
For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a
space of three days,
Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants,
of prayer or of praise,
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have
ended their strife,
And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch
sinks back upon life.

II

"Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved!
God's child, with his dew
On thy gracious gold hair, and those
lilies still living and blue
Just broken to twine round thy harp-
strings, as if no wild heat
Were now raging to torture the desert!"

III

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and
rose on my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder.
The tent was unlooped;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and
under I stooped;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-
patch, all withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I
groped my way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open.
Then once more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered,
and was not afraid,
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!"
And no voice replied.
At the first I saw nought but the black-
ness; but soon I descried

A something more black than the black-
ness—the vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion:
and slow into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and
blackest of all;—
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the
tent-roof,—showed Saul.

IV

He stood as erect as that tent-prop; both
arms stretched out wide
On the great cross-support in the centre,
that goes to each side:
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there,
—as, caught in his pangs
And waiting his change the king-serpent
all heavily hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till
deliverance come
With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul,
drear and stark, blind and dumb.

V

Then I turned my harp,—took off the lilies
we twine round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the
noontide—those sunbeams like swords!

And I first played the tune all our sheep
know, as, one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door, till
folding be done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes,
for lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water
within the stream's bed;
And now one after one seeks its lodgings,
as star follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so
blue and so far!

VI

—Then the tune, for which quails on the
cornland will each leave his mate
To fly after the player; then, what makes
the crickets elate,
Till for boldness they fight one another:
and then, what has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside
his sand house—
There are none such as he for a wonder,
half bird and half mouse!—
God made all the creatures and gave them
our love and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children,
one family here.

VII

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers,
their wine-song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good
friendship, and great hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of this world's
life.—And then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his
journey—"Bear, bear him along
With his few faults shut up like dead
flowerets! are balm-seeds not here
To console us? The land has none left,
such as he on the bier.
Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!"
—And then, the glad chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young
maidens, next, she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.
—And then, the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him
and buttress an arch
Nought can break; who shall harm them,
our friends?—Then, the chorus intoned
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory
enthroned . . .
But I stopped here—for here in the dark-
ness, Saul groaned.

VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened apart;
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered,—and sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban at once with a start—
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.
So the head—but the body still moved not, still hung there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,
As I sang,—

IX

"Oh, our manhood's prime vigour! no spirit feels waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing, nor sinew unbraced.
Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock—
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree,—the cool silver shock
Of the plunge in a pool's living water,—the hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.

And the meal—the rich dates—yellowed
over with gold dust divine,
And the locust's-flesh steeped in the pitcher;
the full draught of wine,
And the sleep in the dried river-channel
where bulrushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling
so softly and well.
How good is man's life, the mere living!
how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses,
for ever in joy!
Hast thou loved the white locks of thy
father, whose sword thou didst guard
When he trusted thee forth with the armies,
for glorious reward?
Didst thou see the thin hands of thy
mother, held up as men sung
The low song of the nearly-departed, and
heard her faint tongue
Joining in while it could to the witness,
'Let one more attest,
I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a life-
time, and all was for best. . . .'
Then they sung thro' their tears in strong
triumph, not much,—but the rest.
And thy brothers, the help and the con-
test, the working whence grew
Such result as from seething grape-bundles,
the spirit strained true!

And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of wonder and hope,
Present promise, and wealth of the future beyond the eye's scope—
Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine;
And all gifts which the world offers singly, on one head combine!
On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage, like the throe
That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour, and lets the gold go:
High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning it,—all
Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King Saul!"

X

And lo, with that leap of my spirit, heart, hand, harp and voice,
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice
Saul's fame in the light it was made for —as when, dare I say,
The Lord's army in rapture of service, strains through its array,
And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—
"Saul!" cried I, and stopped,
And waited the thing that should follow.
Then Saul, who hung propt

By the tent's cross-support in the centre,
was struck by his name.
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy sum-
mons goes right to the aim,
And some mountain, the last to withstand
her, that held, (he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and
flowers) on a broad bust of stone
A year's snow bound about for a breast-
plate,—leaves grasp of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thun-
derously down to his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black but
alive yet, your mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeath-
ings of ages untold—
Yea, each harm got in fighting your
battles, each furrow and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the
tempest—all hail, there they are!
Now again to be softened with verdure,
again hold the nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young
to the green on its crest
For their food in the ardours of summer!
One long shudder thrilled
All the tent till the very air tingled, then
sank and was stilled,
At the King's self left standing before
me, released and aware.

What was gone, what remained? all to
traverse 'twixt hope and despair—
Death was past, life not come—so he
waited. Awhile his right hand
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too
vacant forthwith to remand
To their place what new objects should
enter: 't was Saul as before.
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes,
nor was hurt any more
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn,
ye watch from the shore
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a
sun's slow decline
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence,
o'erlap and entwine
Base with base to knit strength more in-
tense: so arm folded arm
O'er the chest whose slow heavings sub-
sided.

XI

What spell or what charm,
(For, awhile there was trouble within me)
what next should I urge
To sustain him where song had restored
him?—Song filled to the verge

His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it yields
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty! Beyond, on what fields,
Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten the eye
And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup they put by?
He saith, "It is good"; still he drinks not—he lets me praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

XII

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pastures, when round me the sheep
Fed in silence — above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in sleep,
And I lay in my hollow, and mused on the world that might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and the sky:
And I laughed — "Since my days are ordained to be passed with my flocks,
Let me people at least with my fancies the plains and the rocks,

Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show
Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall know!
Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage that gains,
And the prudence that keeps what men strive for." And now these old trains
Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so once more the string
Of my heart made response to my spirit, as thus—

XIII

"Yea, my king,"
I began—"thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that spring
From the mere mortal life held in common by man and by brute:
In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it bears fruit.
Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its stem trembled first
Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler; then safely outburst
The fan-branches all round; and thou mindedst when these too, in turn
Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect: yet more was to learn,

Ev'n the good that comes in with the
palm-fruit. Our dates shall we slight,
When their juice brings a cure for all
sorrow? or care for the plight
Of the palm's self whose slow growth pro-
duced them? Not so! stem and branch
Shall decay, nor be known in their place,
while the palm-wine shall staunch
Every wound of man's spirit in winter.
I pour thee such wine.
Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for!
the spirit be thine!
By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome
thee, thou still shalt enjoy
More indeed, than at first when incon-
scious, the life of a boy.
Crush that life, and behold its wine run-
ning! each deed thou hast done
Dies, revives, goes to work in the world;
until e'en as the sun
Looking down on the earth, though clouds
spoil him, though tempests efface,
Can find nothing his own deed produced
not, must everywhere trace
The results of his past summer-prime,—
so, each ray of thy will,
Every flash of thy passion and prowess,
long over, shall thrill
Thy whole people the countless, with
ardour, till they too give forth

A like cheer to their sons, who in turn
fill the south and the north
With the radiance thy deed was the germ
of. Carouse in the past.
But the license of age has its limit; thou
diest at last.
As the lion when age dims his eye-ball,
the rose at her height,
So with man—so his power and his beauty
for ever take flight.
No! again a long draught of my soul-
wine! look forth o'er the years—
Thou hast done now with eyes for the
actual; begin with the seer's!
Is Saul dead? in the depth of the vale
make his tomb—bid arise
A grey mountain of marble heaped four-
square, till built to the skies.
Let it mark where the great First King
slumbers—whose fame would ye know?
Up above see the rock's naked face, where
the record shall go
In great characters cut by the scribe,—
Such was Saul, so he did;
With the sages directing the work, by the
populace chid,—
For not half, they 'll affirm, is comprised
there! Which fault to amend,
In the grove with his kind grows the
cedar, whereon they shall spend

(See, in tablets 't is level before them) their
praise, and record
With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,
—the statesman's great word
Side by side with the poet's sweet com-
ment. The river 's a-wave
With smooth paper-reeds grazing each
other when prophet winds rave:
So the pen gives unborn generations their
due and their part
In thy being! Then, first of the mighty,
thank God that thou art."

XIV

And behold while I sang . . . But O Thou
who didst grant me that day,
And before it not seldom hast granted,
thy help to essay,
Carry on and complete an adventure,—
my Shield and my Sword
In that act where my soul was thy ser-
vant, thy word was my word,—
Still be with me, who then at the summit
of human endeavour
And scaling the highest man's thought
could, gazed hopeless as ever
On the new stretch of Heaven above me
—till, Mighty to save,

Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's throne from man's grave!
Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my heart,
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels that night I took part,
As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep,
And still fear lest the terrible glory evanish like sleep!
For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while Hebron upheaves
The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and Kidron retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

XV

I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever more strong
Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand replumed
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his countenance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of yore,

And feels slow for the armlets of price,
with the clasp set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere
error had bent
The broad brow from the daily communion;
and still, though much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front
you, the same, God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, de-
secrate, never quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop, till,
stayed by the pile
Of his armour and war-cloak and gar-
ments, he leaned there awhile,
And sat out my singing,—one arm round
the tent-prop, to raise
His bent head, and the other hung slack
—till I touched on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all times, to
the man patient there,
And thus ended, the harp falling forward.
Then first I was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just
above his vast knees
Which were thrust out on each side around
me, like oak-roots which please
To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I
looked up to know
If the best I could do had brought solace:
he spoke not, but slow

Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till
he laid it with care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will,
on my brow: thro' my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he
bent back my head, with kind power—
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as
men do a flower.
Thus held he me there with his great
eyes that scrutinised mine—
And oh, all my heart how it loved him!
but where was the sign?
I yearned—"Could I help thee, my father,
inventing a bliss,
I would add to that life of the past, both
the future and this.
I would give thee new life altogether, as
good, ages hence,
As this moment,—had love but the war-
rant, love's heart to dispense!"

XVI

Then the truth came upon me. No harp
more—no song more! outbroke—
"I have gone the whole round of Creation:
I saw and I spoke!
I, a work of God's hand for that purpose,
received in my brain

And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—returned him again
His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw.
I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet all's law!
Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked
To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dewdrop was asked.
Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at wisdom laid bare.
Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite care!
Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?
I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no less,
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.
And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)
The submission of Man's nothing-perfect to God's All-Complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet!

Yet with all this abounding experience, this Deity known,
I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.
There 's one faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink,
I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)
Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst
E'en the Giver in one gift. — Behold! I could love if I durst!
But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake
God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain, for love's sake!
—What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors great and small,
Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth appal?
In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?
Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? here, the parts shift?
Here, the creature surpass the Creator, the end, what Began?—
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,

And dare doubt He alone shall not help
him, who yet alone can?
Would it ever have entered my mind, the
bare will, much less power,
To bestow on this Saul what I sang of,
the marvellous dower
Of the life he was gifted and filled with?
to make such a soul,
Such a body, and then such an earth for
insphering the whole?
And doth it not enter my mind (as my
warm tears attest)
These good things being given, to go on,
and give one more, the best?
Ay, to save and redeem and restore him,
maintain at the height
This perfection,—succeed with life's day-
spring, death's minute of night?
Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch
Saul, the mistake,
Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,
—and bid him awake
From the dream, the probation, the pre-
lude, to find himself set
Clear and safe in new light and new life,
—a new harmony yet
To be run, and continued, and ended—
who knows?—or endure!
The man taught enough by life's dream,
of the rest to make sure.

By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning
intensified bliss,
And the next world's reward and repose,
by the struggle in this.

XVII

"I believe it! 't is Thou, God, that givest,
't is I who receive:
In the first is the last, in thy will is my
power to believe.
All 's one gift: thou canst grant it more-
over, as prompt to my prayer
As I breathe out this breath, as I open
these arms to the air.
From thy will, stream the worlds, life and
nature, thy dread Sabaoth:
I will?—the mere atoms despise me! and
why am I loth
To look that, even that in the face too?
why is it I dare
Think but lightly of such impuissance?
what stops my despair?
This;—'t is not what man Does which ex-
alts him, but what man Would do!
See the king—I would help him but can-
not, the wishes fall through.
Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow,
grow poor to enrich,
To fill up his life, starve my own out, I
would—knowing which,

I know that my service is perfect.—Oh,
speak through me now!
Would I suffer for him that I love? So
wilt Thou—so wilt Thou!
So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest,
uttermost Crown—
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor
leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in!
It is by no breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that Salvation
joins issue with death!
As thy Love is discovered almighty, al-
mighty be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it,
of Being beloved!
He who did most, shall bear most; the
strongest shall stand the most weak.
'T is the weakness in strength that I cry
for! my flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it.
O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee:
a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever!
a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life
to thee! See the Christ stand!"

XVIII

I know not too well how I found my way
home in the night.
There were witnesses, cohorts about me,
to left and to right,
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen,
the alive—the aware—
I repressed, I got through them as hardly,
as strugglingly there,
As a runner beset by the populace famished
for news—
Life or death. The whole earth was
awakened, hell loosed with her crews;
And the stars of night beat with emotion,
and tingled and shot
Out in fire the strong pain of pent know-
ledge: but I fainted not.
For the Hand still impelled me at once
and supported—suppressed
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet,
and holy behest,
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and
the earth sank to rest.
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had
withered from earth—
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the
day's tender birth;
In the gathered intensity brought to the
grey of the hills;

In the shuddering forests' new awe; in
the sudden wind-thrills;
In the startled wild beasts that bore off,
each with eye sidling still
Tho' averted, in wonder and dread; and
the birds stiff and chill
That rose heavily, as I approached them,
made stupid with awe!
E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—
he felt the new Law.
The same stared in the white humid faces
upturned by the flowers;
The same worked in the heart of the
cedar, and moved the vine-bowers.
And the little brooks witnessing, mur-
mured, persistent and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices
—E'en so! it is so.

"De Gustibus—"

I

Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
(If loves remain)
In an English lane,
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
Making love, say,—
The happier they!
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon
And let them pass, as they will too soon,
With the beanflowers' boon,
And the blackbird's tune,
And May, and June!

II

What I love best in all the world,
Is, a castle, precipice-encurled,
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
(If I get my head from out the mouth
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
And come again to the land of lands)—

"DE GUSTIBUS—"

In a sea-side house to the farther south,
Where the baked cicalas die of drouth,
And one sharp tree ('t is a cypress) stands,
By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
My sentinel to guard the sands
To the water's edge. For, what expands
Without the house, but the great opaque
Blue breadth of sea, and not a break?
While, in the house, for ever crumbles
Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
A girl bare-footed brings and tumbles
Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
And says there 's news to-day—the king
Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling.
—She hopes they have not caught the felons.
    Italy, my Italy!
Queen Mary's saying serves for me—
    (When fortune's malice
    Lost her, Calais.)
Open my heart and you will see
Graved inside of it, "Italy".
Such lovers old are I and she;
So it always was, so it still shall be!

The Guardian-Angel

A PICTURE AT FANO

Dear and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me!
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
Shall find performed thy special ministry
And time come for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,
And suddenly my head be covered o'er
With those wings, white above the child who prays

Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding
Me, out of all the world; for me, discarding
Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door!

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door opes, like that child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face instead,
Thou bird of God! And wilt thou bend me low
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garments spread?

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing

Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired!
I think how I should view the earth and skies
And sea, when once again my brow was bared
After thy healing, with such different eyes.
O world, as God has made it! all is beauty:
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
What further may be sought for or declared?

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
(Alfred, dear friend) that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently, — with his own head turned away
Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

We were at Fano, and three times we went
To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's content
—My angel with me too: and since I care
For dear Guercino's fame, (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)

And since he did not work so earnestly
At all times, and has else endured some wrong,—
I took one thought his picture struck from me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.
My Love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

Cleon

"As certain also of your own poets have said"—

Cleon the poet, (from the sprinkled isles,
Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,
And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps "Greece")—
To Protos in his Tyranny: much health!

They give thy letter to me, even now:
I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.
The master of thy galley still unlades
Gift after gift; they block my court at last
And pile themselves along its portico
Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee:
And one white she-slave from the group dispersed
Of black and white slaves (like the chequer-work
Pavement, at once my nation's work and gift,
Now covered with this settle-down of doves),
One lyric woman, in her crocus vest

Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands
Commends to me the strainer and the cup
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence!
For so shall men remark, in such an act
Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,
Thy recognition of the use of life;
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate
To help on life in straight ways, broad enough
For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil,
Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,
Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim
Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect,
Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's sake—
Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,
Whence, all the tumult of the building hushed,

Thou first of men mightst look out to the east.
The vulgar saw thy tower; thou sawest the sun.
For this, I promise on thy festival
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,
Making this slave narrate thy fortunes, speak
Thy great words, and describe thy royal face—
Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the most
Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me here.
It is as thou hast heard: in one short life
I, Cleon, have effected all those things
Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.
That epos on thy hundred plates of gold
Is mine,—and also mine the little chaunt,
So sure to rise from every fishing-bark
When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their nets.
The image of the sun-god on the phare
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine;
The Pœcile, o'er-storied its whole length,
As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine too.

I know the true proportions of a man
And woman also, not observed before;
And I have written three books on the soul,
Proving absurd all written hitherto,
And putting us to ignorance again.
For music,—why, I have combined the moods,
Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine;
Thus much the people know and recognise,
Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not.
We of these latter days, with greater mind
Than our forerunners, since more composite,
Look not so great (beside their simple way)
To a judge who only sees one way at once,
One mind-point, and no other at a time,—
Compares the small part of a man of us
With some whole man of the heroic age,
Great in his way,—not ours, nor meant for ours,
And ours is greater, had we skill to know.
Yet, what we call this life of men on earth,

This sequence of the soul's achievements here,
Being, as I find much reason to conceive,
Intended to be viewed eventually
As a great whole, not analysed to parts,
But each part having reference to all,—
How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,
Endure effacement by another part?
Was the thing done?—Then what's to do again?
See, in the chequered pavement opposite,
Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,
And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid—
He did not overlay them, superimpose
The new upon the old and blot it out,
But laid them on a level in his work,
Making at last a picture; there it lies.
So, first the perfect separate forms were made,
The portions of mankind—and after, so,
Occurred the combination of the same.
Or where had been a progress, otherwise?
Mankind, made up of all the single men,—
In such a synthesis the labour ends.
Now, mark me—those divine men of old time
Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point

The outside verge that rounds our faculty;
And where they reached, who can do more than reach?
It takes but little water just to touch
At some one point the inside of a sphere,
And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the rest
In due succession: but the finer air
Which not so palpably nor obviously,
Though no less universally, can touch
The whole circumference of that emptied sphere,
Fills it more fully than the water did;
Holds thrice the weight of water in itself
Resolved into a subtler element.
And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full
Up to the visible height—and after, void;
Not knowing air's more hidden properties.
And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to Zeus
To vindicate his purpose in its life:
Why stay we on the earth unless to grow?
Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,
That he or other God, descended here
And, once for all, showed simultaneously
What, in its nature, never can be shown
Piecemeal or in succession;—showed, I say,

The worth both absolute and relative
Of all His children from the birth of time,
His instruments for all appointed work.
I now go on to image,—might we hear
The judgment which should give the due to each,
Show where the labour lay and where the ease,
And prove Zeus' self, the latent, everywhere!
This is a dream. But no dream, let us hope,
That years and days, the summers and the springs
Follow each other with unwaning powers.
The grapes which dye thy wine are richer far,
Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock;
The suave plum than the savage-tasted drupe;
The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet;
The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn flowers;
That young and tender crescent-moon, thy slave,
Sleeping upon her robe as if on clouds,
Refines upon the women of my youth.
What, and the soul alone deteriorates?

I have not chanted verse like Homer's, no—
Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor carved
And painted men like Phidias and his friend:
I am not great as they are, point by point:
But I have entered into sympathy
With these four, running these into one soul,
Who, separate, ignored each other's arts.
Say, is it nothing that I know them all?
The wild flower was the larger—I have dashed
Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's
Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit,
And show a better flower if not so large.
I stand, myself. Refer this to the gods
Whose gift alone it is! which, shall I dare
(All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext
That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,
Discourse of lightly or depreciate?
It might have fallen to another's hand—what then?
I pass too surely: let at least truth stay!

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.
This being with me as I declare, O king,
My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,
So done by me, accepted so by men—
Thou askest if (my soul thus in men's hearts)
I must not be accounted to attain
The very crown and proper end of life:
Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,
I face death with success in my right hand:
Whether I fear death less than dost thyself
The fortunate of men. "For" (writest thou)
"Thou leavest much behind, while I leave nought:
Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,
The pictures men shall study; while my life,
Complete and whole now in its power and joy,
Dies altogether with my brain and arm,
Is lost indeed; since,—what survives myself?
The brazen statue that o'erlooks my grave,
Set on the promontory which I named;
And that—some supple courtier of my heir

Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,
To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.
I go, then: triumph thou, who dost not go!"

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.
Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse
Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,
That admiration grows as knowledge grows?
That imperfection means perfection hid,
Reserved in part, to grace the after-time?
If, in the morning of philosophy,
Ere aught had been recorded, aught perceived,
Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked
On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,
Ere man had yet appeared upon the stage—
Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced
The perfectness of others yet unseen.

Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned thee
"Wilt thou go on a step, improve on this,
Do more for visible creatures than is done?"
Thou wouldst have answered, "Ay, by making each
Grow conscious in himself—by that alone.
All 's perfect else: the shell sucks fast the rock,
The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims
And slides; the birds take flight, forth range the beasts,
Till life's mechanics can no further go—
And all this joy in natural life is put,
Like fire from off Thy finger into each,
So exquisitely perfect is the same.
But 't is pure fire—and they mere matter are;
It has them, not they it: and so I choose,
For man, Thy last premeditated work
(If I might add a glory to this scheme)
That a third thing should stand apart from both,
A quality arise within the soul,
Which, intro-active, made to supervise
And feel the force it has, may view itself,

And so be happy." Man might live at first
The animal life: but is there nothing more?
In due time, let him critically learn
How he lives; and, the more he gets to know
Of his own life's adaptabilities,
The more joy-giving will his life become.
The man who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said:
"Let progress end at once,—man make no step
Beyond the natural man, the better beast,
Using his senses, not the sense of sense".
In man there's failure, only since he left
The lower and inconscious forms of life.
We called it an advance, the rendering plain
A spirit might grow conscious of that life,
And, by new lore so added to the old,
Take each step higher over the brute's head.
This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,

Which whole surrounding flats of natural life
Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to;
A tower that crowns a country. But, alas!
The soul now climbs it just to perish there,
For thence we have discovered ('t is no dream—
We know this, which we had not else perceived)
That there 's a world of capability
For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,
Inviting us; and still the soul craves all,
And still the flesh replies, "Take no jot more
Than ere you climbed the tower to look abroad!
Nay, so much less, as that fatigue has brought
Deduction to it". We struggle—fain to enlarge
Our bounded physical recipiency,
Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,
Repair the waste of age and sickness. No,
It skills not: life 's inadequate to joy,

As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.
They praise a fountain in my garden here
Wherein a Naiad sends the water-spurt
Thin from her tube; she smiles to see it rise.
What if I told her, it is just a thread
From that great river which the hills shut up,
And mock her with my leave to take the same?
The artificer has given her one small tube
Past power to widen or exchange—what boots
To know she might spout oceans if she could?
She cannot lift beyond her first straight thread.
And so a man can use but a man's joy
While he sees God's. Is it for Zeus to boast,
"See, man, how happy I live, and despair—
That I may be still happier—for thy use!"
If this were so, we could not thank our Lord,
As hearts beat on to doing: 't is not so—
Malice it is not. Is it carelessness?
Still, no. If care—where is the sign, I ask—

And get no answer: and agree in sum,
O king, with thy profound discouragement,
Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.
Most progress is most failure! thou sayest well.

The last point now:—thou dost except a case—
Holding joy not impossible to one
With artist-gifts—to such a man as I—
Who leave behind me living works indeed;
For, such a poem, such a painting lives.
What? dost thou verily trip upon a word,
Confound the accurate view of what joy is
(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)
With feeling joy? confound the knowing how
And showing how to live (my faculty)
With actually living?—Otherwise
Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king?
Because in my great epos I display
How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act—
Is this as though I acted? if I paint,
Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore young?

Methinks I 'm older that I bowed myself
The many years of pain that taught me art!
Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more:
But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something too.
Yon rower with the moulded muscles there
Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.
I can write love-odes—thy fair slave 's an ode.
I get to sing of love, when grown too grey
For being beloved: she turns to that young man
The muscles all a-ripple on his back.
I know the joy of kingship: well—thou art king!

"But", sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat,
To find thee tripping on a mere word) "what
Thou writest, paintest, stays: that does not die:
Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,
And Æschylus, because we read his plays!"

Why, if they live still, let them come and take
Thy slave in my despite—drink from thy cup—
Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive?
Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,—
In this, that every day my sense of joy
Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
In power and insight) more enlarged, more keen;
While every day my hairs fall more and more,
My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase—
The horror quickening still from year to year,
The consummation coming past escape,
When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy—
When all my works wherein I prove my worth,
Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,
Alive still, in the phrase of such as thou,
I, I, the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so over-much,
Shall sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
I dare at times imagine to my need
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,

Unlimited in capability
For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us:
That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait
On purpose to make sweet the life at large—
Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death
We burst there as the worm into the fly,
Who, while a worm still, wants his wings.
But, no!
Zeus has not yet revealed it; and, alas!
He must have done so—were it possible!

Live long and happy, and in that thought die,
Glad for what was. Farewell. And for the rest,
I cannot tell thy messenger aright
Where to deliver what he bears of thine
To one called Paulus—we have heard his fame
Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—
I know not, nor am troubled much to know.
Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,
As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
Hath access to a secret shut from us?

Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
In stooping to inquire of such an one,
As if his answer could impose at all.
He writeth, doth he? well, and he may write.
Oh, the Jew findeth scholars! certain slaves
Who touched on this same isle, preached him and Christ;
And (as I gathered from a bystander)
Their doctrines could be held by no sane man.

Popularity

Stand still, true poet that you are,
I know you; let me try and draw you.
Some night you 'll fail us. When afar
You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star.

My star, God's glow-worm! Why extend
That loving hand of His which leads you,
Yet locks you safe from end to end
Of this dark world, unless He needs you—
Just saves your light to spend?

His clenched Hand shall unclose at last,
I know, and let out all the beauty.
My poet holds the future fast,
Accepts the coming ages' duty,
Their present for this past.

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;
"Others give best at first, but Thou
For ever set'st our table praising,—
Keep'st the good wine till now."

Meantime, I 'll draw you as you stand,
With few or none to watch and wonder.
I 'll say—a fisher (on the sand
By Tyre the Old) his ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
And coloured like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells?

And each bystander of them all
Could criticise, and quote tradition
How depths of blue sublimed some pall,
To get which, pricked a king's ambition;
Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

Yet there 's the dye,—in that rough mesh,
The sea has only just o'er-whispered!
Live whelks, the lip's beard dripping fresh,
As if they still the water's lisp heard
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

Enough to furnish Solomon
Such hangings for his cedar-house,
That when gold-robed he took the throne
In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
Might swear his presence shone

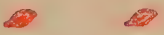
Most like the centre-spike of gold
  Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb,
What time, with ardours manifold,
  The bee goes singing to her groom,
Drunken and overbold.

Mere conchs! not fit for warp or woof!
  Till art comes,—comes to pound and squeeze
And clarify,—refines to proof
  The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

And there 's the extract, flasked and fine,
  And priced, and saleable at last!
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine
  To paint the future from the past,
Put blue into their line.

Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle eats.
  Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns his cup.
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—
  Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?
What porridge had John Keats?

Two in the Campagna



I wonder do you feel to-day
  As I have felt, since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
  In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May?

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
  Has tantalised me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
  Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

Help me to hold it: first it left
  The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
  Some old tomb's ruin: yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

Where one small orange cup amassed
  Five beetles, — blind and green they grope

Among the honey-meal,—and last
  Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast!

The champaign with its endless fleece
  Of feathery grasses everywhere!
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
  An everlasting wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease.

Such life there, through such lengths of hours,
  Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
  Such letting Nature have her way
While Heaven looks from its towers.

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
  Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above.
  How is it under our control
To love or not to love?

I would that you were all to me,
  You that are just so much, no more—
Nor yours, nor mine,—nor slave nor free!
  Where does the fault lie? what the core
Of the wound, since wound must be?

I would I could adopt your will,
  See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
  At your soul's springs, — your part, my
    part
In life, for good and ill.

No. I yearn upward—touch you close,
  Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the
    rose
  And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.

Already how am I so far
  Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
  Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?

Just when I seemed about to learn!
  Where is the thread now? Off again!
The old trick! Only I discern—
  Infinite passion and the pain
Of finite hearts that yearn.

A Grammarian's Funeral

[*Time*—Shortly after the revival of learning in Europe.]

Let us begin and carry up this corpse,
Singing together.
Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes,
Each in its tether
Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,
Cared-for till cock-crow.
Look out if yonder's not the day again
Rimming the rock-row!
That's the appropriate country—there, man's thought,
Rarer, intenser,
Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
Chafes in the censer!
Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop;
Seek we sepulture

On a tall mountain, citied to the top,
Crowded with culture!
All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels;
Clouds overcome it;
No, yonder sparkle is the citadel's
Circling its summit!
Thither our path lies—wind we up the heights—
Wait ye the warning?
Our low life was the level's and the night's;
He's for the morning!
Step to a tune, square chests, erect the head,
'Ware the beholders!
This is our master, famous, calm, and dead,
Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,
Safe from the weather!
He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
Singing together,
He was a man born with thy face and throat,
Lyric Apollo!

Long he lived nameless: how should spring take note
Winter would follow?
Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!
Cramped and diminished,
Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon!
My dance is finished?"
No, that's the world's way! (keep the mountain-side,
Make for the city.)
He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
Over men's pity;
Left play for work, and grappled with the world
Bent on escaping:
"What's in the scroll," quoth he, "thou keepest furled?
Shew me their shaping,
Theirs, who most studied man, the bard and sage,—
Give!"—So he gowned him,
Straight got by heart that book to its last page:
Learned, we found him!
Yea, but we found him bald too—eyes like lead,
Accents uncertain:

"Time to taste life", another would have said,
"Up with the curtain!"
This man said rather, "Actual life comes next?
Patience a moment!
Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,
Still, there's the comment.
Let me know all. Prate not of most or least,
Painful or easy:
Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,
Ay, nor feel queasy!"
Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,
When he had learned it,
When he had gathered all books had to give;
Sooner, he spurned it!
Image the whole, then execute the parts—
Fancy the fabric
Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
Ere mortar dab brick!

(Here's the town-gate reached: there's the market-place
Gaping before us.)

Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace
(Hearten our chorus)
Still before living he 'd learn how to live—
No end to learning.
Earn the means first—God surely will contrive
Use for our earning.
Others mistrust and say—"But time escapes,—
Live now or never!"
He said, "What 's Time? leave Now for dogs and apes!
Man has For ever."
Back to his book then: deeper drooped his head;
Calculus racked him:
Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead;
Tussis attacked him.
"Now, Master, take a little rest!"—not he!
(Caution redoubled!
Step two a-breast, the way winds narrowly.)
Not a whit troubled,
Back to his studies, fresher than at first,
Fierce as a dragon
He, (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)
Sucked at the flagon.

Oh, if we draw a circle premature,
Heedless of far gain,
Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure,
Bad is our bargain!
Was it not great? did not he throw on God,
(He loves the burthen)—
God's task to make the heavenly period
Perfect the earthen?
Did not he magnify the mind, shew clear
Just what it all meant?
He would not discount life, as fools do here,
Paid by instalment!
He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success
Found, or earth's failure:
"Wilt thou trust death or not?" he answered "Yes.
Hence with life's pale lure!"
That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it:
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit:
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.

That, has the world here—should he need
the next,
Let the world mind him!
This, throws himself on God, and unper-
plext
Seeking shall find Him.
So, with the throttling hands of Death at
strife,
Ground he at grammar;
Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were
rife.
While he could stammer
He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be!—
Properly based *Oun*—
Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic
De,
Dead from the waist down.
Well, here's the platform, here's the
proper place.
Hail to your purlieus
All ye highfliers of the feathered race,
Swallows and curlews!
Here's the top-peak! the multitude be-
low
Live, for they can there.
This man decided not to Live but Know—
Bury this man there?
Here—here's his place, where meteors
shoot, clouds form,
Lightnings are loosened,

Stars come and go! let joy break with
the storm—
Peace let the dew send!
Lofty designs must close in like effects:
Loftily lying,
Leave him—still loftier than the world
suspects,
Living and dying.

One Way of Love

All June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves,
And strew them where Pauline may pass.
She will not turn aside? Alas!
Let them lie. Suppose they die?
The chance was they might take her eye.

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute!
To-day I venture all I know.
She will not hear my music? So!
Break the string—fold music's wing.
Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

My whole life long I learned to love.
This hour my utmost art I prove
And speak my passion.—Heaven or hell?
She will not give me heaven? 'T is well!
Lose who may—I still can say,
Those who win heaven, blest are they.

Another Way of Love

June was not over,
Though past the full,
And the best of her roses
Had yet to blow,
When a man I know
(But shall not discover,
Since ears are dull,
And time discloses)
Turned him and said with a man's true air,
Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 't were,—
"If I tire of your June, will she greatly care?"

Well, Dear, in-doors with you!
True, serene deadness
Tries a man's temper.
What's in the blossom
June wears on her bosom?
Can it clear scores with you?
Sweetness and redness,
Eadem semper!

Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly!
If June mends her bowers now, your hand left unsightly
By plucking their roses,—my June will do rightly.

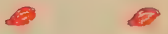
And after, for pastime,
If June be refulgent
With flowers in completeness,
All petals, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles
Of wine poured at mass-time,—
And choose One indulgent
To redness and sweetness:
Or if, with experience of man and of spider,
She use my June-lightning, the strong insect-ridder,
To stop the fresh spinning,—why, June will consider.

Misconceptions

This is a spray the Bird clung to,
  Making it blossom with pleasure,
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
  Fit for her nest and her treasure.
  Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was the poor spray's, which the flying
    feet hung to,—
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

This is a heart the Queen leant on,
  Thrilled in a minute erratic,
Ere the true bosom she bent on,
  Meet for love's regal dalmatic.
  Oh, what a fancy ecstatic
Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer
    went on—
Love to be saved for it, proffered to,
    spent on!

One Word More



TO E. B. B.

I

There they are, my fifty men and women
Naming me the fifty poems finished!
Take them, Love, the book and me together.
Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

II

Rafael made a century of sonnets,
Made and wrote them in a certain volume
Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil,
Else he only used to draw Madonnas:
These, the world might view — but One, the volume.
Who that one, you ask? Your heart instructs you.
Did she live and love it all her life-time?
Did she droop, his lady of the sonnets,

Die, and let it drop beside her pillow
Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,
Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving—
Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's,
Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's?

III

You and I would rather read that volume,
(Taken to his beating bosom by it)
Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,
Would we not? than wonder at Madonnas—
Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
Her, that visits Florence in a vision,
Her, that 's left with lilies in the Louvre—
Seen by us and all the world in circle.

IV

You and I will never read that volume.
Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple
Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.
Guido Reni dying, all Bologna

Cried, and the world with it, "Ours—
the treasure!"
Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

V

Dante once prepared to paint an angel:
Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice".
While he mused and traced it and re-
traced it,
(Peradventure with a pen corroded
Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped
for,
When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the
wicked,
Back he held the brow and pricked its
stigma,
Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,
Loosed him, laughed to see the writing
rankle,
Let the wretch go festering thro' Flor-
ence)—
Dante, who loved well because he hated,
Hated wickedness that hinders loving,
Dante standing, studying his angel,—
In there broke the folk of his Inferno.
Says he—"Certain people of importance"
(Such he gave his daily, dreadful line to)
Entered and would seize, forsooth, the
poet.

Says the poet—"Then I stopped my painting".

VI

You and I would rather see that angel,
Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
Would we not?—than read a fresh Inferno.

VII

You and I will never see that picture.
While he mused on love and Beatrice,
While he softened o'er his outlined angel,
In they broke, those "people of importance":
We and Bice bear the loss for ever.

VIII

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?

IX

This: no artist lives and loves that longs not
Once, and only once, and for One only,
(Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language
Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—
Using nature that's an art to others,
Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature.
Ay, of all the artists living, loving,
None but would forego his proper dowry.

Does he paint? he fain would write a poem,—
Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,
Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
Once, and only once, and for One only,
So to be the man and leave the artist,
Save the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

X

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement!
He who smites the rock and spreads the water,
Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,
Even he, the minute makes immortal,
Proves, perchance, his mortal in the minute,
Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.
While he smites, how can he but remember,
So he smote before, in such a peril,
When they stood and mocked — "Shall smiting help us?"
When they drank and sneered—"A stroke is easy!"

When they wiped their mouths and went
their journey,
Throwing him for thanks—"But drought
was pleasant".
Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;
Thus the doing savours of disrelish;
Thus achievement lacks a gracious some-
what;
O'er-importuned brows becloud the man-
date,
Carelessness or consciousness, the gesture.
For he bears an ancient wrong about him,
Sees and knows again those phalanxed
faces,
Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed
prelude—
"How shouldst thou, of all men, smite,
and save us?"
Guesses what is like to prove the sequel—
"Egypt's flesh-pots—nay, the drought was
better".

XI

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic
warrant!
Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven bril-
liance,
Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial
fiat.
Never dares the man put off the prophet.

XII

Did he love one face from out the thousands,
(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely,
Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,)
He would envy yon dumb patient camel,
Keeping a reserve of scanty water
Meant to save his own life in the desert;
Ready in the desert to deliver
(Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)
Hoard and life together for his mistress.

XIII

I shall never, in the years remaining,
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues,
Make you music that should all-express me;
So it seems: I stand on my attainment.
This of verse alone, one life allows me;
Verse and nothing else have I to give you.
Other heights in other lives, God willing—
All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love!

XIV

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—
Shade so finely touched, love's sense must
seize it.
Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
Lines I write the first time and the last
time.
He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush,
Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,
Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,
Makes a strange art of an art familiar,
Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.
He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe
thro' silver,
Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.
He who writes, may write for once, as
I do.

XV

Love, you saw me gather men and
women,
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
Enter each and all, and use their service,
Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a
poem.
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving:
I am mine and yours—the rest be all
men's,

Karshook, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.
Let me speak this once in my true person,
Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,
Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence—
Pray you, look on these my men and women,
Take and keep my fifty poems finished;
Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also!
Poor the speech; be how I speak, for all things.

XVI

Not out that you know me! Lo, the moon's self!
Here in London, yonder late in Florence,
Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.
Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,
Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.
Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,
Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,
Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,
Hard to greet, she traverses the house-roofs,

Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,
Goes dispiritedly,—glad to finish.

XVII

What, there's nothing in the moon noteworthy?
Nay—for if that moon could love a mortal,
Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy)
All her magic ('t is the old sweet mythos)
She would turn a new side to her mortal,
Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman—
Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
Blind to Galileo on his turret,
Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even!
Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal—
When she turns round, comes again in heaven,
Opens out anew for worse or better?
Proves she like some portent of an iceberg
Swimming full upon the ship it founders,
Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals?
Proves she as the paved-work of a sapphire
Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain?
Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu

Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,
Stand upon the paved-work of a sapphire.
Like the bodied heaven in his clearness
Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved-work,
When they ate and drank and saw God also!

XVIII

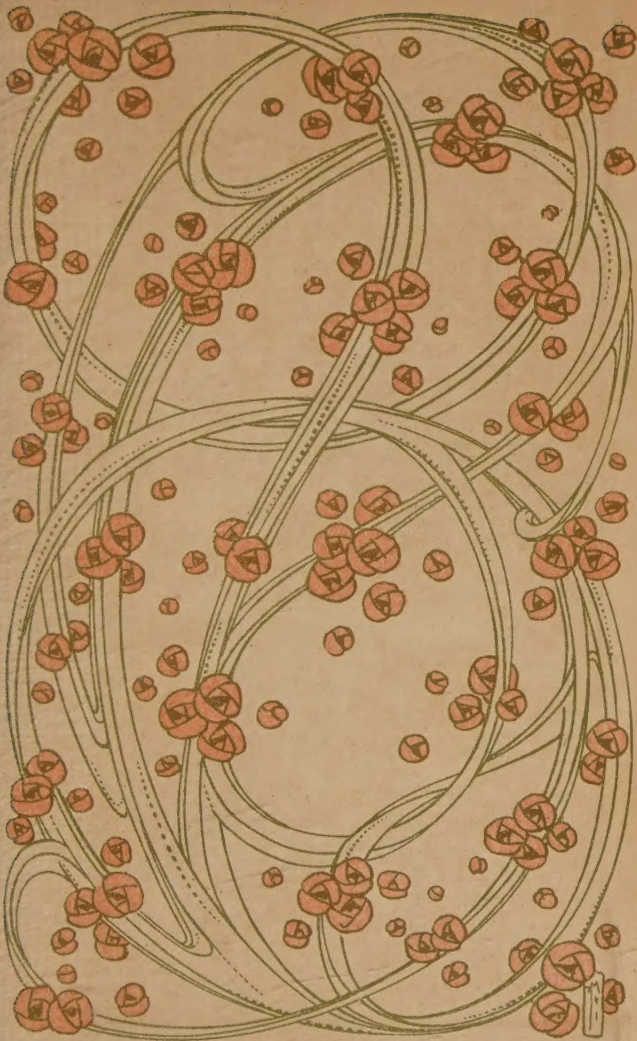
What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know.
Only this is sure—the sight were other,
Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,
Dying now impoverished here in London.
God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her.

XIX

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!
This to you—yourself my moon of poets!
Ah, but that's the world's side—there's the wonder—
Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you.

There, in turn I stand with them and
praise you,
Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
But the best is when I glide from out
them,
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed
of,
Where I hush and bless myself with
silence.

XX

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,
Wrote one song — and in my brain I
sing it,
Drew one angel — borne, see, on my
bosom!

Printed and bound in Great Britain